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Doha fisasco

US OFFICIALS said the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) economic conference which wrapped up three days of largely uneventful business in Doha on Tuesday may effectively have put an end to regional economic cooperation for the foreseeable future.

"The [US] administration is very much concerned that this Middle East economic track has been shut down," one US official told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Doha, he added, marked not so much a step forward for the cooperation process, as its burial.

Following Egypt's decision not to attend, Israel downgraded its representation. Foreign Minister David Levy decided it would be inappropriate for him to travel to Qatar "due to the economic nature of the conference." *(see p.8)*

Likud mutiny

THE ISRAELI opposition Labour Party launched a new effort to break up Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's parliamentary coalition and call for elections before their scheduled date in 2000. Labour's parliamentary faction head Raanan Cohen told the AP that Labour was proposing a deal whereby its leader Ehud Barak would invite the now-governing Likud into a unity government if Labour won the elections.

Cohen spoke after a meeting on Tuesday with lawmakers from Shas, the Third Way and an immigrants party, which together control almost a third of [illegible] coalition members.

Netanyahu returned yesterday to Israel after cutting short his US trip to meet King Hussein of Jordan in London Tuesday night.

The prime minister faced a mutiny within the governing Likud party with his opponents openly discussing a no-confidence Knesset vote to force new elections and then try to replace Netanyahu as their party's candidate for prime minister.

New building

PALESTINIANS accused the Israeli Defence Ministry of deliberate provocation and warned of possible reactions after it emerged that approval had been given for the construction of a new building inside the Jewish enclave occupied by the Israeli army in the West Bank city of Hebron.

The 1,000-square-meter building is to house six settler families. A spokesman for the settlers told AFP the project had been authorised several months ago, but the decision was not made public until yesterday.

Jamal Shubaki, a local leader of the Fatah faction of the PLO, said the extension of the settlement was a violation of accords signed between Israel and the Palestinians in January, which stipulated the Israelis would hand back 80 per cent of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority.

Tension recently erupted in the town when the Israeli army reopened a road running through the heart of the old city. On Monday Israeli soldiers clashed with two dozen Islamist students throwing stones on the edge of the Israeli-controlled zone.

In the shadow of death

The unprecedented viciousness of Monday's terrorist attack is seen by some as signalling a shift in militant tactics. Shaden Shehab reports

The brutality of Monday's terrorist attack outside the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut in Luxor which left 58 tourists dead, and for which the underground Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya has claimed responsibility, raises question marks about a shift in the militants' tactics.

Following the deadliest attack yet by anti-government Islamist militants, President Hosni Mubarak, blaming the carnage on lax security, replaced Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi and ordered tighter security measures at all tourist sites. Hundreds of foreign visitors decided to pack and return home, signalling a blow to the flourishing tourism industry, a major source of foreign currency.

Around 10am on Monday bus loads of tourists were making their way to the 3,400-year-old temple on the west bank of the Nile opposite Luxor. The two policemen on duty watched. Everything appeared peaceful.

Suddenly six gunmen, wearing police uniforms, came down the hills surrounding the temple compound and opened fire with automatic rifles. Panic-stricken tourists dived behind rocks and ran in to the ancient monuments seeking cover.

The two policemen fired back with pistols, wounding one of the assailants in the leg. But the policemen, outnumbered, quickly lost the battle. After killing them the gunmen turned to their wounded colleague and shot and killed him before opening fire on the tourists.

About 20 minutes later, according to witnesses, hundreds of unarmed Luxor residents arrived at the scene and gave chase to the militants who hijacked an empty tourist bus, parked nearby, and drove to Wadi El-Mohareb in the Valley of the Queens.

In the meantime, police reinforcements were being rushed from the other side of the Nile to the west bank. The militants abandoned the bus and climbed up the hills in an attempt to escape, but were engaged by police fire. According to some witnesses the gun battle lasted for as long as three hours and ended with the death of the five assailants.

The carnage claimed the lives of 58 tourists, including Swiss, Japanese, German and British nationals, and four Egyptians. At least 24 others were wounded.

Two leaflets were found at the scene of the slaughter. The first, signed Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, warned tourists against visiting Egypt and demanded the release of the group's spiritual leader, Omar Abdel-Rahman, who is serving a life imprisonment sentence in the US. The other, signed "the squadron of destruction and sabotage," warned that the followers of Mustafa Hamza, a terrorist involved in an abortive attempt on President Mubarak's life in Addis Ababa in 1995, would continue the war against the government.

Six Egyptian survivors, receiving medical treatment at the Luxor hospital, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that it was "a gruesome massacre."

"They acted like savages. They did not only kill the tourists but it seemed that they were bent on mutilating their bodies as well," said Abdel-Nasser Abu Amer, a police guard. He explained that the gunmen continued shooting, even after their target had died.

"They shot me in the leg and I fell," Abu-Amer said. "Five or six bodies fell over me. I was trapped and soaked in blood. I had to shut my eyes and mouth to stop the blood from coming in. There was moaning all over the place."

Taxi-driver Badayi Ahmed said he was ordered by a gunman to lie down. "I pleaded with him but he shot me in the leg. I didn't see anything afterwards but I heard shooting for half an hour at least. The police were not there."

An ambulance brought the corpses of the six assailants to the hospital morgue. Angry onlookers watched as the almost naked, bloodied bodies were dragged out.

A limited number of tourists visited the temple on Tuesday — the majority were packing to return home — after heavy security was imposed. The sand outside the monument was stained with blood.

President Mubarak visited the site on Tuesday and publicly chided security chiefs for failing to safeguard the visitors.

"You have failed. You don't move. You only stay in Cairo. This is a tourist site and you are telling me the police were two kilometres away?" a furious Mubarak told security chiefs.

Following Mubarak's return to Cairo it was announced that Habib El-Adli, who heads the Interior Ministry'se security branch, had been appointed interior minister.

Mubarak also ordered tighter security measures at all tourist sites and set up a committee under Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri to review security plans.

The attack dealt a severe blow to the tourism industry. Travel agencies in Cairo were flooded by cancellations from Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Japan and other countries.

Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya claimed responsibility for the attack, the first ever in Luxor. In a statement faxed to Western news organisations in Cairo, the underground group said the assailants wanted to take a large number of foreigners hostage and trade them for Abdel-Rahman's release.

The scope and brutality of the attack, in the view of political experts, suggested that the militants might have changed their tactics. According to Diaa Rashwan, a researcher at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, the assailants staged the atrocity to prove that they remain active, in defiance of a cease-fire call made by the imprisoned Gama'a leaders in July. "The group which carried out the attack felt hemmed in by the security forces and their leaders who had instigated the peace initiative... They shifted their tactics to ultra-violence to create the strongest effect," he said. *(see pp. 2&3)*



Gloves off: President Mubarak speaks to the media at the site of the massacre in Luxor *photo: Khaled El-Fiqi*

Diplomacy gains ground in UN-Iraq standoff

As America beefed up its military forces in the Gulf, efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the Iraqi crisis appear to be gaining momentum

The diplomatic offensive to resolve the crisis that followed the Iraqi expulsion of American UN weapons inspectors gathered momentum yesterday even as Washington continued its military build-up in the Gulf. Yet despite bolstering its air forces in the region, officials said the US remained open to suggestions that might defuse the crisis.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is to cut short a trip to India and fly to Geneva to meet the foreign ministers of Russia, Britain and France. A spokesman for Albright said the US would not know if Russian efforts to settle the crisis had succeeded until the meeting in Geneva, expected early today.

In London, a British Foreign Office spokesman said Foreign Secretary Robin Cook would join Albright, French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

The three-week-old crisis has been building up since Baghdad carried out its threat last week to expel US members of UN weapons inspection teams from Iraq.

Russia has been pressing for a diplomatic solution. Primakov, a Middle East expert with long experience of dealing with Iraq, met with Iraqi deputy prime Minister Tareq Aziz in Moscow on Tuesday, after which it was announced they had worked out a plan aimed at avoiding the use of force.

According to Baghdad newspapers the Russian proposals to settle the stand off were studied on Tuesday night during a meeting of the Revolution Command Council and regional command of the ruling Baath party, chaired by President Saddam Hussein.

The UN Security Council was scheduled to meet yesterday. Several of its members were expected to urge Richard Butler, the chief UN arms inspector, to send weapons monitors to Iraq as soon as possible. Butler has said that Iraq cannot dictate the composition of the teams.

Washington said it would send six B-52 bombers and six F-117a Stealth fighters to the Gulf this week to join a force of some 250 US warplanes and 22 ships poised near Iraq. Clinton also authorised the US military commander in the region to send an air expeditionary force of about 30 more fighters and B-1 bombers to the region if needed, Defence Department spokesman Ken Bacon said.

He said the new deployment was triggered not only by the dispute over inspections but by "extremely active" Iraqi air defence moves, some of which he called an offensive threat to US and allied jets patrolling no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq.

Egypt has also been working hard to make sure that the Iraqi-American confrontation is resolved by diplomatic means, and not military action.

Diplomatic sources told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that a compromise is currently being discussed that will allow the Iraqis greater political and economic leeway within the framework of the UN-imposed sanctions in return for allowing the Americans to work with the arms inspection teams. The terms of the food-for-oil deal will also be improved, allowing Iraq to sell more oil and buy a wider range of commodities than they do now.

The compromise would also take advantage of the opaque language in which UN Security Council resolution 1134, imposing restrictions on the travel of Iraqi officials who obstruct the work of the arms inspectors, is couched, tacitly allowing freedom of travel to as many senior officials as possible. In return, the Iraqis will have to cooperate more closely with the inspection teams and refrain from making threats against neighbouring countries.

The sources said the US appears to have softened its position as a result of its failure to gain Security Council approval for an air strike and in response to Egypt's success in winning strong Arab support for the position that an air strike would only add to the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The compromise was discussed during visits to Cairo this week by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah and Martin Indyk, US Under-Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

"Egypt insists on Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions regarding its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction but also worked hard to make it clear that the Arab side is opposed to military action against Iraq," a diplomatic source said.

Since the beginning of the crisis, President Hosni Mubarak has sent three messages to Saddam Hussein. Foreign Minister Amr Moussa has also been in regular contact with his Iraqi opposite number Mohamed Said Al-Sahhaf.

Inside

Al-Ahram Weekly

Massacre in Thebes











A day after the attack many tourists insisted on visiting the Hatshepsut Temple (above left) while Luxor residents were mourning their dead (bottom left); army officers evacuate the wounded from Luxor to Maadi Military Hospital
(photos: Khaled El-Fiqi and Sami Bushra)

Mubarak slams lax security

Before Monday's attack, archaeological sites had largely escaped the attention of terrorists. Now the carnage on the West Bank has raised the question of how safe these areas are for tourists. Omayma Abdel-Latif reports

A little over a month ago, the temple of Hatshepsut was turned into an armed fortress as hundreds of members of the security forces were installed in the area to protect world dignitaries and other spectators attending a spectacular production of Verdi's *Aida*. By contrast, last Monday, laxness in routine security arrangements surrounding the temple obviously facilitated the assailants in carrying out their massacre.

During his visit to Luxor on Tuesday, President Hosni Mubarak himself "severely criticised" the security arrangements and drew attention to a "number of loopholes," said Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif.

According to Mohamed El-Saghir, former head of the Upper Egypt antiquities department and a long-time resident of Luxor, security precautions were stepped up at all archaeological sites with the rise of the terrorist phenomenon in the early 1990s. But since the problem seemed to have been contained, there has been a period of "relaxation".

"After the decline of terrorism, the presence of the security forces was gradually reduced." El-Saghir told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "Moreover, archaeological sites were never the scene of terrorist attacks, even during the worst periods."

El-Saghir said that a large security presence at archaeological sites is also undesirable, "because it creates a climate of fear that is incompatible with the sanctity of the temples and tombs."

An official at the Luxor antiquities department argued that even if there was a large security presence there, very little could have been done to prevent the massacre.

"They don't manage to protect the antiques that are being stolen from under their very noses, so how can they hope to protect the hordes of tourists coming into the temple on a daily basis?" said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Another factor that has aroused concern is that Monday's assailants wore the uniforms of the Central Security Forces — an anti-riot police squad.

Again, lax security appeared to be the principal reason the terrorists were able to claim such an appalling number of victims. According to Abdel-Nasser Khodeir, *a police guard in the area, only three policemen* were on duty at the temple of Hatshepsut at the time of the attack. All three were killed by the assailants.

A source at the Tourism Police Authority, explaining the security arrangements, said police would usually accompany a tourist bus to the archaeological site and then leave. He conceded that the sites themselves are not very heavily guarded.

The source also said that policemen assigned to archaeological sites are not trained to deal with crisis-situations such as Monday's attack.

And yet the source insisted that "police forces do all they can to enable tourists to visit archaeological sites in safety. A tourist has to be very unlucky to come to harm," he said.

Zahi Hawass, archaeological inspector for the Giza Plateau, suggested that every archaeological site should have a security plan similar to the one that is *implemented around* the Pyramids and the Sphinx.

"The Pyramids area has three entrances and a police force is assigned to each entrance," Hawass said. "Moreover, there is a dedicated antiquities police force assigned by the Supreme Council of Antiquities to make sure that every single tourist is safe and that nothing untoward can happen to them."

Hawass said that every archaeological site should also be secured by plain-clothes policemen who are trained marksmen.

Reacting to reports that some foreign travel agents are already removing Upper Egypt from their itineraries, Hawass said: "What they don't realise is that the Egyptian people are not against tourists and tourism. It is not logical that because a handful of Egyptians are targeting tourists they should cancel their plans to visit this most important part of the country."

'It's as if they killed us too'

Luxor residents are seething with anger and frustration, as much as they are worried about their livelihoods. Shaden Shehab *spoke to outraged locals — and to the tourists who want to stay*

Most of the people of Luxor preferred to stay indoors on Tuesday, the day after the attack. Many shops and bazaars, which normally open in the early morning, remained closed. The owners of the shops that did open their doors prefered to sit inside, not even trying to sell their merchandise. A few horse-drawn carts roamed the otherwise deserted streets.

Ask anyone the reason and you get the reply: "Because of the massacre". The "massacre" is how people here refer to Monday's attack.

"We are not only saddened that tourism will be affected but we are also ashamed that such an attack took place here," said Youssef Sonbol, a bazaar owner. Monday's attack was the first to be carried out in Luxor by Islamist militants.

"We are *'sa'eyda'* [Upper Egyptians] which means that when our people get killed we have to take revenge. We are sad that we were not able to kill the attackers, but we didn't have weapons — what can a pistol do against an automatic rifle?" said Nagi Abdel-Malek, a shopowner who, along with others, had gone to the scene of the attack to try and catch the assailants.

"I am very sad, how can our visitors return to their homes in coffins? I wish I could eat the attackers alive," said Mohamed Anwar, a horse-cart owner.

Other Luxor citizens were worried they will suffer economically, because the attack is bound to affect tourism.

"How will we make a living? Our livelihood depends on tourism," said Wael Ibrahim, a *felucca* owner. "They not only killed the tourists, it is as if they killed us too," he added angrily.

"Their bodies [the attackers] should be cut to pieces and thrown to the dogs, they will make thousands of people jobless," Awad Sayed, a horse-cart owner said.

"They have destroyed us. We were depending on the winter season. I will withdraw my children from school, I will not be able to afford the expense," said Nabil Rizk, a micro-bus driver.

Others blamed the police. "The police should have had a stronger presence at such touristic sites," Mohamed Mahmoud, a taxi driver said. "The police get tough with us, why don't they save their energy for catching terrorists?" he declared loudly for all to hear.

At the same time, many tourists said they were sad for Egypt as well as for the victims. Many tourist agencies have advised their clients to leave Luxor. Bulletins posted in many hotels contained urgent memos from travel agencies. "British passport holders should evacuate Luxor due to the shooting. All guests are requested to fly from Luxor to UK 18/11/1997. There will be no flights operating after that date," read one memo.

Another tourist agency memo read: "Please be advised that due to the incident which occurred today [Monday], the British foreign commonwealth office is advising all British passport holders not to visit Luxor. We have been instructed to suspend charter flights until notified otherwise."

But some tourists wanted to stay. "We came a week ago, and we want to complete our trip through to the 25th, but our agency has said it will not be responsible for us if we do not leave," said Dominic Dolav, a Briton.

Orela Walsh, another Briton, said: "I will do my best to stay. I want to see the rest of the wonderful monuments." "I feel safe," said Roger Race, a Briton. "But I have to leave at the request of my travel agency."

About 100 tourists visited the Hatshepsut temple on Tuesday.

"It saddens me to visit this site after many tourists died here but I am trying to overcome that emotion," said Peter Stein, an American.

Julia Lodge, another American, said: "The site is too magnificent to leave without seeing it. I am very sad for this country. The people are very kind, the attackers couldn't have been from here."

Run-away groups on the rampage

Why now? And who was behind it? Amira Howeidy gauges expert opinion on the role of Islamist militancy in Monday's attack

Political experts interviewed by *Al-Ahram Weekly* all agreed that this week's attack reflected a shift in the tactics of the radical Al-Gama'a Al-Islamyia. They said too that it should be viewed in the light of the ceasefire call made by a number of imprisoned leaders of both the Gama'a and Jihad in July.

"It should also be connected to two [earlier] attacks by militants," said Diaa Rashwan, an expert on radical Islamist groups at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies. "The first, dating from before the ceasefire call, is the attack on Izbit Kamel in Bahgoura last year, in which14 people were killed by random fire. The second is an attack that took place in El-Minya on 11 October this year when armed men *stopped a police car and killed 11* people, again by random fire."

According to Rashwan, the first attack was carried out by a group who call themselves the 'El-Fartoushi' group. The second was the work of a group on the run. Monday's attack was staged by the El-Fartoushi group, Rashwan believes.

"I believe that there was an attempt to launch this attack four days earlier, when a group of armed men attacked a tourist train inside El-Minya railway station, apparently in order to carry out a massacre. That attack failed," Rashwan said. "I think they decided to repeat the attempt in a safer, more open place that would be packed with tourists. The Luxor temple was the perfect choice. At least one of the assailants, whose body has been identified, is from Naga' Hamadi, one of the hotbeds of the Gama'a."

He said that tourisitic sites such as Luxor, Aswan, Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh are usually not in any real danger because there are no radical Islamists there. The assailants probably came from El-Minya, Assiut or Beni Sweif, he added.

According to Rashwan, the attackers acted because they wanted to *prove that they exist in defiance of the* ceasefire call. "But one has to understand that martyrdom is not a simple act, it is a very complex process where the martyr is ready to do anything, to go to the extreme in order to achieve his aim."

So is it a shift in tactics? For Rashwan, yes. "The group which decided to carry out the Luxor attack felt they were besieged, both by the security forces, and by their leaders who had embarked upon a peace initiative that would ultimately have negated their very existence [as fighters]. They shifted therefore to tactics of ultra-violence, so as to create the strongest posible effect," he said.

Hala Mustafa, another expert on Islamist militancy, noted that "a number of small groups have emerged within the radical Islamist movement which are largely unknown and remain totally outside the control of the leaders of both Jihad and Gama'a."

"The government's 10-year-old clampdown on both the mainstream groups has left a vacuum in which a newer, younger generation could emerge — a generation of militants with different views and different mentalities," Mustafa said. "This is very similar to the18 September at*tack on a tourist bus outside the Egyp*tian museum, which was carried out by people who had no connection to the Islamist groups. They believed that killing tourists is a good cause and that they are martyrs".

The collapse of the historic hierarchy of the Jihad and Gama'a, Mustafa pointed out, is another reason why various groups are now acting on their own. "The new groups want to prove they are active and strong, so they resort to a symbolic attack which involves mass murder and maiming of the bodies, inspired, perhaps by their Algerian counterparts," she added.

The timing, as many observers also observed, is too significant to be ignored. The attack took place on the second day of the controversial economic Doha summit which Egypt, together with a number of Arab countries, have boycotted. Egypt has also voiced its opposition to the continuing of sanctions imposed on both Libya and Iraq. "Many people are entertaining scenarios of external incitement," Mustafa said. "This is a possibility... but, on the other hand, one could simply interpret the attack on tourists as an attack on the West which is causing so much misery [to *the Arabs*]."

But Montasser El-Zayyat, *de facto* spokesman for the Gama'a and key figure in the July cease-fire call, doubts that the radical Islamist groups were responsible for the attack. "From my experience of them and knowledge of their methods and their way of thinking, I doubt they were involved in this attack which I find gruesome..I am in a state of shock," he told the*Weekly*.

When reminded that the Gama'a had claimed responsibility, El-Zayyat said: "I cannot, at this early stage, determine whether the statement received by the news agencies is genuine or not. The Gama'a has a special manner of writing and their statements use serial numbers [for authentication]. But if it turns out to be genuine, then they did it," Zayyat said.

He added that the attack could not be linked to Egypt's position on the Doha summit. "If the Gama'a carried this out, it could be in retaliation to the ceasefire call. I doubt very much that it had anything to do with political tension between Egypt and other countries... they are not that sophisticated."

Abul-Ela Madi, the would-be founder of the *Wassat* [Centre] party and a former leading member of the Gama'a, issued a statement condemning the attack as "a crime by any standard".

Madi told the *Weekly* that if the attack was not instigated by "external elements", then it might simply have been ordered by "the expatriate leaders *of the Gama'a and Jihad*, who have stood out against the cease-fire call and vowed to thwart it."

Militants vie for responsibility

The Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, Egypt's largest militant group, claimed responsibility for the slaying of 58 tourists in Luxor and said the operation was intended to secure the release of its spiritual leader from a US jail.

In a statement faxed to western news organisations in Cairo, the group warned tourists to stay away from Egypt to avoid being caught up in its war with the government.

The group said one of its units had tried to take tourists hostage at the Hatshepsut temple. The aim was to win freedom for its leader, blind cleric Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, jailed in the United States for conspiring to blow up the World Trade Centre in 1993.

Witnesses, however, did not mention any attempted hostage-taking, saying instead that six gunmen, disguised as policemen, disembarked from a car and began firing in*discriminately with automatic rifles at tour* groups entering the Pharaonic monument.

The Gama'a statement said the attack was carried out by 15 of its members, four of them were killed and two were captured. But officials said only six gunmen were involved and they were all killed.

"In a courageous operation carried out in the morning of Monday 17 November 1997, a Gama'a unit tried to take prisoner the greatest possible number of foreign tourists at one of the tourist temples in Luxor, with the aim of securing the release of the general *emir* [leader] of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, Dr Abdel-Rahman, as well as of historic leaders and sons of Gama'a and other prisoners who are being held in American and Egyptian jails," the statement said.

"But the rash behaviour and irresponsibility of government security forces with regard to tourist and civilian lives led to a high number of casualties," the statement added.

The group, which has claimed more attacks against tourists than any other since Islamist militants took up arms in 1992, reiterated a warning it has often issued to foreigners to keep away from Egypt.

"The *Gama'a* repeats its call to foreign states to advise their citizens not to visit Egypt at this time so that they do not become victims of a battle they are not party to. Our battle is with the Egyptian regime and not with any other state or its people," the group said.

The group promised more attacks unless the government met its conditions. "The Gama'a Al-Islamiya will continue with its military operations as long as the regime does not meet our demands, the most important of which are the application of God Almighty's law and the cutting of relations with the Zionist entity," it said.

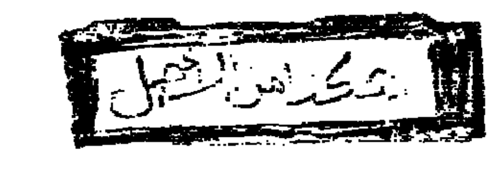
A witness in Luxor said he saw a leaflet at the scene of the carnage that read: "NO to tourists in Egypt — Omar Abdel-Rahman's *squadron of havoc and destruction*."

Another militant group, *Tala'eh Al-Fath* or Vanguards of Conquest, also warned tourists against visiting Egypt and said Monday's attack would not be the last.

In a statement faxed to an international news agency on Tuesday, the group did not claim responsibility for Monday's attack but said it was against visitors who did not heed "earlier warnings" about coming to Egypt.

"Today's military operation in Luxor won't be the last one," said the statement, which was dated *Monday and bore* the group's logo. "Foreigners per se are not targets, but we have warned them against giving money to the Egyptian regime. Entry to Egypt has to be through an agreement with the people and not with the government which does not represent the people."

The Vanguards group is a revival of the Jihad organisation which assassinated President Anwar El-Sadat in 1981.



A cold winter for tourism

The massacre in Luxor may dent Egypt's top currency in the short term. But, writes Rehab Saad, many tourists are determined to continue

"Just forget about tourism for a year at least." This is how Abu-Bakr El-Shorbagi of 3A Tours puts it. "It is the worst attack ever against tourists, and it will be a long time before it is forgotten," he said.

Immediately after news of the massacre was flashed across the world by satellite, 11 Japanese groups cancelled trips to Egypt, El-Shorbagi said. The three major British tour operators who deal with the best part of the 350,000 Britons who visit Egypt annually have also cancelled all holiday flights to the country. The British travel firm Airtours said it was making arrangements to bring home its 351 holidaymakers presently in the Luxor area, as well as about 300 customers of other companies. Hundreds of Germans also rushed to cancel their holidays in Egypt.

Ezzeddin El-Shabrawi of Egyptian American Tours believes that the massacre has had an even greater impact because it took place in Luxor which has hitherto been seen as a safe city. "Tourists always believe that Luxor and Aswan are safe, even safer than Cairo. Now the situation is different. I believe that security measures should be tightened up. Perhaps helicopters should be used for surveillance," he said.

"We are all unhappy and frustrated after what happened in Luxor. Tourism is our main source of income. I don't know how we will be able to pay our bills," said Motaz Sidki of Travco Travel.

Ehab Gaddis, general manager of Gaddis Hotel in Luxor described the attack as a tragedy. "If these figures for the dead and injured are correct, then you can say goodbye to the winter season this year. What kind of security is this to give tourist groups? How can the murderers spend 40 minutes shooting tourists without any interference from the police?" he asked.

According to wire service dispatches, overseas tour operators have flown home hundreds of tourists from Luxor and travel advisories were issued by different countries warning their citizens against travelling to Upper Egypt.

Reuter and AP reported that 11 empty aircraft were flying from Britain to Luxor to bring home Britons who have cut short their stay following the tragedy. However, an official at the Civil Aviation Authority in Cairo said that British Airways had only brought in one plane from London to Luxor to collect those who were wishing to leave.

Swiss travel agents also declared that they were making plans to evacuate their clients from Egypt. The government of Switzerland has warned their nationals to stay away from Egypt altogether.

The national travel agents union in France (SNAV) said it was making arrangements to bring home all their clients from Egypt. In a statement, it recommended its members to suspend sales of tours to Egypt until further notice and to delay packages already sold or shift them to another holiday destination.

Both Japan and Germany issued similar warnings to their citizens. The German Association of Travel Agencies announced that travellers with reservations for Egypt will be permitted to change to another destination or cancel their trip altogether without penalty. For its part, Japan's government warned against travel to southern Egypt and Japanese travel agencies have begun to cut down on planned tours to the area.

In spite of the fact that no Americans were reported dead or injured in the attack, the US Embassy in Cairo was advising private citizens not to travel to the south for the next three months.

Despite the tragedy, some travellers were still flocking to the Hatshepsut Temple. According to AP, scores of tourists, shaken by the killings but determined to continue with their vacations, visited the monument on Tuesday.

CNN also said that many tourists expressed a willingness to see out their stay in Egypt although others had asked to leave. A tourist interviewed by the news network said that Egypt is widely seen as one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the world and that even if there is a fall-off in the number of tourists in the immediate future, this will not last for long.

"Business is going on along the east bank of the Nile as usual. I went with my group to the Karnak and Luxor temples and tomorrow we will be heading over to the West Bank of the Nile. No one wants to change his plans," Ehab Farag, a tour guide who was in Luxor on the day of the attack, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Tourism Minister Mamdouh El-Beltagui, who was in London, said that Egypt was as safe as any country in the world for visitors. "Egypt is no less safe than any other destination, including the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States," he said. He added that it is a fact of life that we are living in a violent world: criminals are everywhere and tourists are often targeted, not only in Egypt, as some would claim, but also in other countries such as Jordan, Turkey, Morocco, Israel and Britain.

"We are very sad for what has happened, but we are taking all necessary measures to upgrade security arrangements," he added.

Adel Abdel-Aziz, head of the Egyptian Tourism Authority (ETA) told the *Weekly* that the attack "goes against our traditions and religion. Egyptians are always hospitable and friendly. The assassins are irresponsible people who did not understand the effect their actions would have on the country's economy. I believe that the whole world is aware of the *true* nature of the Egyptian people and their traditions, and knows that they condemn terrorism in all its forms," he said.

Abdel-Aziz added that there is an operations room in the Ministry of Tourism to answer queries from foreign travel agencies and to follow up on the condition of the injured.

According to Ministry of Tourism statistics, 4.1 million tourists came to Egypt in the fiscal year that ended in June — an increase of 15 per cent over the previous fiscal year. Germany, England, Italy and France led the countries exporting tourists to Egypt. Revenues from tourism were more than $3 billion in 1995/1996, making it the nation's top foreign currency earner.



Amr Moussa and Cotti at the Maadi Hospital *photo: Adel Ahmed*

'They were very close'

Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti, whose nationals were the worst hit in the carnage, flew to Cairo to visit the wounded. Dina Ezzat was with him at the Maadi Military Hospital

Stories of horror awaited Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti when he visited the Maadi Military Hospital on Tuesday, to check on the health of 10 of his nationals who were being treated for mild to serious injuries.

"I simply want to say that after my visit with the 10 injured Swiss — many of whom are in good condition — I was really touched [by what I heard and saw]," Cotti told reporters at the end of his visit. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Amr Moussa.

The Swiss official added, "I will never forget this young mother who told me that she left her children in Switzerland [to come on this tour] and that here she lost her husband. Nor will I ever forget the other moving stories [that I heard]."

According to hospital and official sources, 31 Swiss nationals were killed and 10 were wounded. Eleven others have already flown back home.

For the visitors who were standing near the entrance to the Hatshepsut Temple, it was a moment when death came too close. So close that for many of the wounded, the images of others' blood and of their own narrow escape will remain etched on their minds forever.

"They were very close. They were shooting at us and they were very close. There were no police, no soldiers to keep them away. It was just terrifying," said one Swiss woman survivor.

She does not remember how it happened. The killing just started, went on, and then stopped. "Then there was blood everywhere," she said.

According to one of the doctors on duty, the nature of the injuries suffered by the victims indicates that in some cases the assailants must have been standing almost face to face with the tourists.

Complaints about lax security were also aired by Egyptian victims and their relatives. "There was never enough security at this temple. And when the attack happened, it was individuals and not the security forces who came to the rescue," said the mother of 23-year old Nahla. She had accompanied her daughter on the plane that carried the victims from Luxor to Cairo. Now, she was in tears as she stepped out of the emergency ward after visiting her. Asked whom she blamed for what had happened to her child, she said: "Luxor always used to be safe. The government must do something. Things cannot be left this way."

In addition to the 10 Swiss and Nahla, there were three other wounded in the Maadi Hospital on Tuesday: an Egyptian, a German, and a Japanese.

Of the 14, seven were in intensive care, of whom to were said to be in very critical condition. "They need major and highly sensitive neurological surgery. We don't know if they will make it through. But everything that can be done is being done," said one source at the hospital.

Foreign Minister Moussa said that most of the wounded "are in a stable condition and they are getting all the necessary care."

Moussa was in close contact with the Japanese foreign minister, to whom he had conveyed the condolences of the Egyptian president, people and government. They had also discussed arrangements for the Japanese families who wanted to come to Cairo to escort the bodies of their relatives on the journey home. "We are going to make sure that these families will get all the help they need," said Moussa.

For his part Cotti affirmed that his nationals were being very well treated. "I can say that it is very clear and very moving to see the kindness with which the hospitalised victims are being treated by the staff of the hospital. It is something that everybody here has sensed and which I was very touched by," he told reporters, before he set off for Cairo airport to fly back home.

Asked by reporters if Egypt had taken advantage of Cotti's visit to raise Cairo's concerns over the policies of certain European states which offer a safe haven to Islamist militants, Moussa said that combating terrorism was a constant concern for all nations, "but at this moment, it is the humanitarian aspect that is uppermost in our minds".

Egypt and world united in horror

THE MASSACRE in Luxor was immediately condemned by key Egyptian figures and political parties, as well as world leaders.

The Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Mohamed Sayed Tantawi said: "This is a criminal act. This attack is opposed to the precepts of Islam. We reject and condemn this crime."

Tantawi said that "tourists are guests and we must protect them."

Pope Shenudah III of the Coptic Orthodox Church said: "Those who committed this horrid crime cannot be true to their nation or to any principles of morality or religion. They damage our generous country. I am deeply saddened by this cowardly attack against these innocent tourists who have done nothing wrong."

The leftist Tagammu Party condemned "this horrible crime carried out by a group of killers who have no sense of humanity." The party said it shared "with the Egyptian people their sense of grief and anger and their determination to confront these terrorist groups decisively."

The Nasserist Party said "indiscriminate attacks on civilians are unjustifiable... These senseless acts, which are not sanctioned by religion or morality, stand to be condemned."

Yassin Serageddin, spokesman of the Wafd Party, said the attack was "extremely regrettable."

Ibrahim Shukri, leader of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, described the attack as "a devilish act directed against all Egyptians." He said there were "foreign hands behind this act which runs against the morals of the Egyptian people."

The Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) described the massacre as "a gross and unprecedented violation of the right to life... This horrible massacre is also a violation of the tenets of all religions and all international charters of human rights...The EOHR fully condemns this massacre regardless of the identity and objectives of its perpetrators."

US President Bill Clinton telephoned President Hosni Mubarak from Air Force One to express his condolences, describing the attack as a "terrible tragedy".

"The United States deplores and condemns this attack against innocent tourists," Clinton said in a written statement. "Once again, we are reminded of a painful truth: Terrorism is a global threat. No nation is immune. That is why all nations must redouble our commitment to fight this scourge together."

A State Department spokesman, Lee McClenny, said the "brutal and horrifying attack, in addition to killing and injuring innocent tourists, appears aimed at undermining the Egyptian economy which, in turn, hurts ordinary Egyptians."

French President Jacques Chirac expressed solidarity with Mubarak, saying he was certain Egypt would "overcome this ordeal."

"Having heard news of the terrible tragedy that took place in Luxor, I would like to express my sympathy," said Chirac in a telegram made public by his office.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said he was "horrified" by the attack. "I send the British government's heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and our sympathy to the Egyptian government with whom we stand together in condemning this sickening act of violence," Cook said in a statement.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel condemned "as firmly as possible" what he called a "repugnant act of violence by devoted fanatics. We are with the Egyptian government in condemning this cowardly act of violence," he said.

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto said: "Such an act should never be condoned and no country should yield to terrorism."

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat described the attack as "terrible." "It is something that goes against our tradition as Arabs, as Muslims and as Christians," he said.

In a cable to Mubarak, Arafat said: "We strongly condemn this terrorist attack and its perpetrators, whose goal is to destabilise Egypt, and we offer our condolences and our sympathy."

Jordan's King Hussein condemned the "criminal attack against innocent victims." The monarch, who was in London, telephoned Mubarak to express "Jordan's support for Egypt" and affirm that Jordan "condemns terrorism in any form and whatever its origin."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan condemned "in the strongest terms this senseless act." Annan was "shocked and appalled at the news of today's [Monday's] terrorist attack in Luxor. He wishes to convey his deepest sympathy and condolences to the government of Egypt and to the bereaved families," said his spokesman, Fred Eckhard.

Mental hospital director gets life

The Supreme Military Court has sentenced to life imprisonment the head of the mental hospital where Saber Farahat, the convicted killer of nine German tourists and their Egyptian bus driver, was kept before escaping to carry out his crime. Khaled Dawoud was there

Following a secret trial, the Supreme Military Court found Dr Nessim Abdel-Malek, director of El-Khanka Mental Hospital, guilty of receiving bribes from Saber Farahat to allow him to leave the hospital unguarded for days and sometimes for weeks. During one of these escapades, Saber and his brother Mahmoud attacked a tourist bus in Cairo's El-Tahrir Square on 18 September with petrol bombs and pistol fire, killing nine Germans and the Egyptian driver. The two brothers have already been sentenced to death in a separate trial. Abdel-Malek was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour.

Saber was certified mentally ill and confined to El-Khanka Hospital after he shot and killed two Americans, a Frenchman and an Italian in the coffee shop of the Semiramis Hotel in October 1993.

The military court also fined Dr Abdel-Malek LE4,000, the estimated total of the bribes he received from Saber.

Saber's name also appeared on the defendants' list in the corruption trial, which included 12 doctors, male nurses and guards working at the hospital. But Saber was not condemned on the bribery charges because he was the one who informed authorities.

In addition to Abdel-Malek, three male nurses were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment each, two to five years and three to three years. The three sentenced to 10 years were also ordered to pay fines ranging between LE1,000 and 3,600, also the estimated total of the bribes they received from Saber.

Dr Sayed El-Qott, head of the Health Ministry's mental hospitals, was found innocent along with a doctor at El-Khanka Hospital and a male nurse.

El-Qott was the doctor who certified Saber mentally deranged following the Semiramis killings. As a result, Saber was not put on trial but sent to El-Khanka Hospital.

Saber had told prosecutors as well as reporters during his trial that El-Qott had received a bribe of LE50,000 from his father to provide him with the insanity certificate.

The charge which prosecutors brought against El-Qott, however, was that he received LE8,000 from Saber's father, not in return for the insanity certificate, but to use his influence and persuade doctors to allow Saber to leave the hospital for limited periods of time.

After the sentences were handed down last Thursday, Saber, who was wearing a red prison uniform given to those on death row, told reporters that he had "lied about El-Qott and Ahmed El-Haggar" — the other doctor who was found innocent. He explained that at the time he met El-Qott in 1993, "the doctor thought that my talk about Jihad [holy struggle] and things like that was a kind of insanity. That is why he gave me the certificate," he said.

El-Qott, before the sentences were pronounced, told reporters from the iron cage where the defendants were kept, that after examining Saber in 1993, "I was convinced that he was insane." He strongly denied that he received any bribes, saying that Saber "fooled me and fooled everyone."

Saber was exempted from military service after serving for a few months in 1992 because army doctors certified him mentally unstable. During his trial, Saber told reporters that he "acted crazy" in order to dodge military service.

After the sentences were passed, Saber said he was happy for El-Qott and the others who were found innocent. "Abdel-Malek deserves what he got because he used to receive bribes," he added. Saber also exchanged what appeared to be a few polite words with El-Qott, telling him that he was sorry for what he did to him.

The other defendants who were sentenced to imprisonment broke down and wept bitterly. One of them tried to attack Abdel-Malek, shouting at him: "You are responsible for all this." Abdel-Malek, who appeared to be in a state of shock after the harsh sentence he received, pushed him away.

All sessions of the corruption trial were secret. Reporters were allowed to attend the sentencing session only, while families of the defendants were denied entry.

Abdel-Malek's wife and three sisters, who were waiting outside, also screamed, wept and started running in the street after learning of the sentence. "Why was he given such a harsh sentence? He did nothing," said Abdel-Malek's wife before she was pushed into a waiting car by relatives.

Another trial of militants opens

A MILITARY court began on Monday the trial of 65 suspected members of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, Egypt's largest militant Islamist organisation, on charges of joining an illegal group and plotting to kill leading government figures, reports **Khaled Dawoud**. The trial opened amid tight security measures at the Haikstep military camp, 35 kilometres northeast of Cairo. The majority of the defendants were young university students but they also included doctors and lawyers.

According to the indictment bill, the accused plotted to assassinate top government officials, such as presidential adviser Osama El-Baz, Zakaria Azmi, chief of the presidential staff, Moufid Shehab, minister of higher education, and judge Salah Badour who had sent several militants to the gallows.

The chief military judge opened hearings by reading out the charges and then asking each defendant whether he was guilty or not. All pleaded innocent. Military prosecutors charged that the first defendant, Gamal Rawash, a doctor, led the group and collected money to fund its activities. Rawash had been arrested earlier, in 1989, and accused of participating in an attempt to assassinate former Interior Minister Zaki Badr.

Rawash was released in 1990 but re-arrested earlier this year. While police searched for him, his brother, Mahmoud, was killed in an exchange of fire with security forces.

The defendants include 16-year-old Amr Ahmed, the youngest defendant ever to stand military trial. His lawyer alleged that he was badly beaten in jail and asked the court to order a medical examination.

Also on trial are two university science students. They are charged with stealing chemicals, which could be used in making primitive bombs, from their faculty laboratories. Omar Ashour, one of the two, is enrolled at the American University in Cairo (AUC), an institute usually attended by the children of the elite because of its high tuition fees.

Ashour's father told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that his son was in touch with Rawash who persuaded him to donate money for Bosnian Muslims, but he denied that Ashour was a member of any terrorist group.

Dozens of lawyers, including one representing the Bar Association, made an appearance to defend four colleagues standing trial and asked for their immediate release.

Mustafa Hassanein, one of the lawyers standing trial, told reporters from the iron cage where the defendants were kept that he had nothing new to announce regarding a so-called appeal made by the imprisoned Gama'a leaders in July, urging their followers to halt anti-government violence.

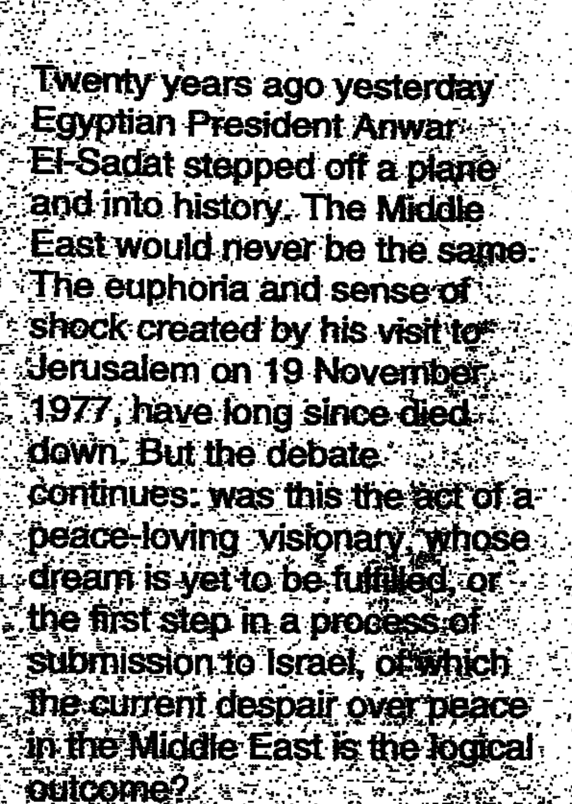
Hassanein's statement came on the same day suspected militants opened fire at a group of tourists at the Hatshepsut Temple in Luxor, killing 58 foreigners and four Egyptians. Six assailants were also killed.

The Gama'a's expatriate leaders rejected the cease-fire call at the time, declaring that they would not stop anti-government attacks until thousands of the group's members were released. An Islamist lawyer who spoke on condition of anonymity said the cease-fire initiative had been "frozen" because the government did not reciprocate it.

Hearings were postponed until 3 December to give lawyers time to study the case.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

A kind of prophesy



Twenty years ago yesterday Egyptian President Anwar El-Sadat stepped off a plane and into history. The Middle East would never be the same. The euphoria and sense of shock created by his visit to Jerusalem on 19 November 1977, have long since died down. But the debate continues: was this the act of a peace-loving visionary, whose dream is yet to be fulfilled, or the first step in a process of submission to Israel, of which the current despair over peace in the Middle East is the logical outcome?



A hearty handshake: Sadat and Begin greet each other at the start of the long road that was to lead to peace between Egypt and Israel.

'By any means possible'



Mustafa Khalil, Egyptian prime minister at the time of the signing of the Camp David Accords and current secretary-general of the ruling NDP, remains convinced: Sadat was a visionary, who saw ahead of his time

Why did President Sadat decide to go to Jerusalem and address the Knesset after three decades of bloodshed?

President Sadat was a visionary. His perception of how to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict was ahead of its time. If other parties were unable to see what Sadat saw then, that is their responsibility. Sadat was a peacemaker, and chose peace as his goal — as did all the Arabs during the June 1996 summit in Cairo, where they too chose peace as their strategic goal. Those who didn't agree with him 20 years ago, have come round to his views now.

The Arabs have to realise that time is not on their side. It is their responsibility that they did not start trying to resolve the conflict 20 years ago when Egypt did. They must keep the time factor in mind.

Was it wise for Egypt to break away from the Arab front and sign a separate peace agreement with Israel?

Since the 1949 truce between the Arabs and Israel, the Arab tracks have always been separate and they should remain that way. Four agreements were signed in 1949 separating the Egyptian-Israeli, Syrian-Israeli, Jordanian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiations from one another.

It is the duty of each Arab country to liberate its own territories in whatever way it sees fit and by any means possible.

After signing the peace agreement in 1979, Egypt and Israel signed 22 normalisation agreements, in which Cairo was able to take back every inch of land that had been occupied by Israel. It should be remembered that the Egyptian negotiator was able to liberate the Egyptian lands without there being one Israeli settlement left on Egyptian soil. It was this achievement that brought an end to the bilateral conflict.

Sadat has been accused of dividing the Arab nation and undermining Arab solidarity.

After the 1967 war, the Arab-Israeli conflict took on a new dimension. Retrieving Palestine was no longer at the heart of the dispute, because Palestine's fate was sealed with Israel's victory over the Arabs. The issue now was to liberate the lands which Israel had occupied during the June War.

Sadat did not desert the Arab ranks by visiting Israel and later signing a separate peace deal with Israel. He was simply trying to solve the problem which had arisen after the 1973 war. It was the [1978] Baghdad summit [where Egypt was ostracised from the Arab nation] which destroyed Arab solidarity.

It is said that Sadat's actions left the Palestinians to face the wrath of Israel alone, which has led to the present quagmire.

At Camp David, when the terms of reference for peace negotiations between the Egyptians and Israelis were set out, there were two documents. One, pertaining to Egyptian-Israeli talks, and the other for talks between Jordan, the West Bank and Israel. The Egyptians were trying to create a framework in which the Palestinians could hold talks regarding the West Bank, which could allow them to negotiate their own peace.

The Palestinians refused to attend the Mena House talks. It is up to each people to negotiate their own peace with Israel and defend their own rights. Gathering several different tracks into a single process of negotiation was impractical, because each country has its own needs and its conflict with Israel is not the same as that of others.

When the Palestinians decided to talk with the Israelis, they went to Oslo. Neither the Egyptians nor the Americans knew what was happening. They were secret talks between the Palestinians and Israelis. No one else interfered.

'A very special vision'



He foresaw the future of the whole region, but when he went to Jerusalem, Sadat did so as president of Egypt, not of *all* the Arabs, argues Mustafa El-Fiqi, Egypt's ambassador in Vienna, a veteran diplomat and scholar

What did Sadat's visit mean for the Arab-Israeli conflict?

It is considered a turning point in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. For Sadat to visit Jerusalem was for him to swim against a tide of events which had accumulated over the preceding four decades.

A new chapter was opened in the Arab-Israeli conflict. For the first time, the whole world saw that the Arabs were peacemakers, which ran contrary to Israeli propaganda that presented the Arabs as opposed to peace, as essentially aggressors.

Was Sadat a visionary when he decided to undertake the visit and single-handedly forge peace with Israel, or was it a mistake to break the unity of Arab ranks?

Sadat was elected president of Egypt, not president of the Arab nation. According to the Egyptian constitution, he was to act on behalf of his people and to serve their interests. If we look at the visit from this perspective, we can consider him to be a far-sighted man with a very special vision, someone who foresaw the future of the whole region. In taking this drastic step he was motivated by Egyptian patriotism, not by Arab nationalism.

On the other hand, if we view the visit within the context of Arab solidarity, it is clear that it was a destructive step for the Arab nation and for the Palestinians in particular. The Arab world was effectively decapitated, for Egypt had always been their leader, both in war and in peace.

I consider Sadat's visit to be one of the major events of this century and I believe it has since been proved to have been in the interests of the Egyptian people, even though it is generally considered to have constituted an historic setback for the cause of Arab solidarity.

In any case, it was a breakthrough that took place in at atmosphere of high drama and it gave Sadat a place in history as a unique statesman. He earned the admiration both of those who supported his visit and those who were opposed to it.

What was the significance of an Egyptian president going to the heart of Israel and addressing the Knesset?

It meant that a man with long political experience, from both before and after the 1952 Revolution, had the courage to take such an historic step. Looking back, we may think it was an easy thing to do, but if you consider the atmosphere and sentiments of the mid-1970s, it was an unprecedented act.

It showed that the spirit of Egyptian civilisation is committed to striving for peace and is opposed to war and aggression. By going to Israel, Sadat was a *genuine reflection of the spirit of Egypt*.

Was it prudent to leave the Palestinians to fend for themselves, especially seeing the great difficulties which they now have with the Israelis?

To answer this question, you have to go back to the events of that time. Sadat opened the door for the Arabs and the Palestinians to join together in making peace.

I remember very well that the Palestinians were invited to the Mena House talks [in Cairo soon after the visit]. Their flag was on the table. But they were unable to understand or make use of the reaction to Sadat's policy at the time. The Palestinians paid a very high price, but I do not feel that Sadat is the one who should shoulder all the responsibility, because his proposal was rejected and his offer refused.

Twenty years after the visit, I feel that this breakthrough is still the driving force behind the peace process, as well as a true reflection of the Egyptian temperament.

Interviews by ***Nevine Khalil***

'Road to defeat'



Sadat went to Jerusalem out of desperation; the Israelis knew it; the rest was bound to follow, argues Fawzi Mansour, professor emiritus at Cairo University, an economist and political analyst

Twenty years later, how do you see Sadat's visit?

Political actions are to be judged not by the motives or intentions of the actors, but by the results of the action. Nevertheless, in the case of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, I feel it is useful to refer to his motivation. There seems to be general agreement that Sadat went to Jerusalem because of the internal difficulties his regime — and he personally — were encountering, mainly as a *result of their increasing alignment* with the parasitic and speculative elements in society, rather than with its real productive forces.

But you cannot make an honourable peace with your enemies unless you have first established peace with your own people. When peace is sought out of desperation, the enemy is usually the first to know, and is apt to exploit to the full your internal weaknesses.

Didn't Egypt get Sinai back?

Yes, after much prevarication, we got Sinai back, but at what price? First, our sovereignty over Sinai is restricted in many ways. The peace treaty with Israel stipulates that only the Egyptian police, and not the army, can be posted on the Israeli-Egyptian borders — on the pretext that Israel's borders need to be secured.

There is no reciprocity in this strange arrangement; *all* the more strange, because history has shown that ever since the creation of the state of Israel, the Egyptian army has never launched an aggressive attack upon Israel, and is most unlikely to do so in any foreseeable future. It has always been the other way round, with Israel making the first massive strike. In the 1973 war, Egypt was liberating its own territories from Israeli occupation.

Having taken the first step towards peace from an extremely vulnerable position, the rest was bound to follow.

The Arab world was grievously split: Palestine and the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon, whose lands are still wholly or partially occupied, were enormously weakened. Having adroitly excluded Egypt from the field of combat, Israel was encouraged to become more and more intransigent, to plan and execute more and more acts of aggression, reaching as far afield as Iraq and Tunisia.

The most important result of the overall weakening of the Arab position following Sadat's impetuous visit to Jerusalem is what is happening now — what the Americans misleadingly call the 'peace process'. Having established its military and political hegemony in the Middle East, Israel's long-term aim is to use this process to secure economic hegemony over the Arab world, to divide the Arab nations even further, and to impede their independent economic development.

But was there an alternative to Sadat's initiative?

This is a big question. To begin to answer it, one has to go back to 1973. Even though militarily there was a stalemate after the cessation of hostilities, the Arabs then had the upper hand: they were united as never before around the cause of national liberation.

The whole world, even in the West, with the exception of course of the United States and its lackey, Great Britain, rallied to *that cause. The use of the oil embargo weapon was extremely* effective, and provided a means by which to disrupt, not just industry, but life in general, in "unfriendly" countries.

It was under these conditions that Sadat unilaterally chose to give away all his cards, for it is historically established that the oil-producing Arab countries lifted the oil embargo at the request of Sadat, and that he gave in to then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on all fronts, even before Kissinger began *to formulate his demands*.

We had the upper hand, and we were bound to win. But we chose the road which led to defeat.

History still being made



Tariq El-Bishri is vice-president of the State Council, as well as a leading historian. Yet for him, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem is not history; its effects continue to be worked out today

"After 20 years a political event becomes historic, in the sense that it has become an event that cannot be detached from all that followed. It has become a 'mother' event, the origin of countless other subsequent events.

"But the past 20 years have preserved Sadat's visit to Jerusalem as a part of the present. This event does not yet belong to the past. The effects of the trip and the peace treaty with Israel that eventually followed are still being worked out today.

"As Arab political analysts and academics, we are not unconcerned observers of events. We see ourselves as active participants having a direct impact on the course or direction history takes. We shape the future. That is why we cannot free ourselves from the memory of that fateful trip to Jerusalem. We cannot even imagine asking the question: "What if it hadn't happened?" What use is it to think of such things? With the coming of 'peace', a new situation emerged. With reconciliation came an end to wars.

"Since 1973, it's no longer possible to imagine a conventional war between Arabs and Israelis. American-Israeli vigilance in the aftermath of the 1973 War prevented another surprise attack being mounted. The collapse of the Soviet Union deprived the Arabs of the military support *they had relied on in the past*.

"With Iraq busy fighting Iran, the Iraqi military machine could no longer be relied upon. Iraq was no longer part of the Arab-Israeli military equation.

"The 1977 popular uprising in Egypt, caused by the deteriorating economic situation and the price hike, may have been what prompted Sadat to seek a peace settlement with the Israelis. He resorted to peace with Israel as a means of *prolonging the life of his own regime*. He also *thought that* peace would help save precious resources from being wasted on arms. Sadat calculated the peace in terms of its potential economic benefits.

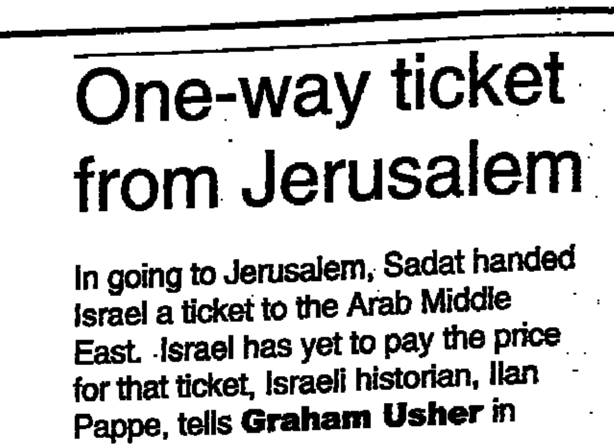
"At that time, Sadat made two statements justifying his actions. The first was that the 1973 War was the "last war". The second was that 99 per cent of "the cards" were in the hands of the United States. These statements angered people — intellectuals in particular, but also public opinion generally. They were interpreted as a sign that Egypt was about to throw itself on the mercy of the US.

"This interpretation might seem to ignore the fact that the world was divided into two camps — one socialist and one capitalist. But 10 years later, the USSR collapsed, and with it the potential of the Soviets as a counterbalance to US power vanished. This poses the question: did Sadat foresee the demise of the USSR and the emergence of the *pax Americana?*

"The peace imposed on the Arabs at Camp David gave Sinai back to Egypt. But the price paid for this was that Egypt abandoned its efforts to bring about Arab unity. And the decision to suspend the war between the Arabs and Israel did not bring about a lasting peace. The Arab-Israeli conflict is not over, it has simply taken on other forms. Instead of a conventional war between armies, it has turned into a struggle between opposing ideologies.

"This *turning-point in the conflict had* a profound effect on the Palestinian liberation movement, which shifted its focus from resistance outside the land of Palestine to resistance within the Palestinian heartland. The Palestinians inside the Occupied Territories are now the decisive factor behind the Palestinian determination to see the struggle through to the end. We have seen this in the 1987 uprising and in the resistance movement in southern *Lebanon*."

Interviews by ***Amira Howeidy***



One-way ticket from Jerusalem

In going to Jerusalem, Sadat handed Israel a ticket to the Arab Middle East. Israel has yet to pay the price for that ticket, Israeli historian, Ilan Pappe, tells Graham Usher in Jerusalem

Ilan Pappe is one of the new wave of Israeli historians who have challenged the received histories of the Israeli state, most notably in his book *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (I.B. Tauris, London, 1994). He is also a leading figure in Hadash, the largest non-Zionist party in Israel with five seats in the Knesset.

In the following interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Pappe looks at the political legacy of Anwar El-Sadat — twenty years after the Egyptian leader's historic visit to Jerusalem.

Twenty years on, how does Israel view Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the subsequent peace with Egypt that came out of it? Has it been a success or failure?

There are two Israeli measures for "success". There are many Israelis — and here I would include the present Likud government — who measure "success" simply by Israel's ability to survive, even if the cost is a constant conflict with the Arab world.

For other Israelis (myself included), any agreement between Israel and the Arabs must be seen as a success, even one as problematic as the Camp David Accords. Sadat's trip was a success because, prior to it, Israel had been alienated from the rest of the Middle East. Sadat opened the door for us to join the Middle Eastern Arab world, to become a legitimate and recognised part of it.

What has been less successful is Israelis' understanding of the price of this ticket. You see, I don't think Sadat came to Jerusalem simply to achieve a bilateral peace treaty with Israel and the so-called "cold peace" that has been obtained since between the two governments. In his speech to the Knesset, Sadat made it clear that the price of Israel's entry into the Middle East and therefore the Arab world would be the resolution of the Palestinian problem. That price has yet to be paid by Israel.

Many would argue that, through Sadat, Israel achieved two of its long-term strategic goals. It achieved a bilateral peace agreement with an Arab country rather than a comprehensive settlement with the Arab world, and it reduced the Palestinian question to a matter of autonomy rather than withdrawal to the 1967 borders. Would you agree with this critique?

Yes. Both Sadat and the Palestinian negotiators in Oslo failed to recognise the fundamental gap between what is agreed on paper and how that agreement is implemented in practice. In other words, what Israel agrees to at a declarative level is not always the same as what it is prepared to give at the practical level.

For example, in the Camp David agreement there is clear reference to Palestinians' legitimate political rights. Yet, through the negotiations, Israel transformed these legitimate rights into a very limited notion of Palestinian autonomy. Israel thus qualified the notion of legitimate rights and the Egyptian negotiators did very little to counter it.

A similar process happened with Oslo: If you read Oslo's Declaration of Principles, it appears that Israel is ready to make major concessions to the Palestinians. Yet, by the time we reach the Cairo Agreement of May 1994, these "concessions" are qualified out of existence.

You see, for Israel, Camp David and Oslo were not merely signed agreements. They were diplomatic battlegrounds that had to be won.

So there was an Arab failure at the level of negotiations, in the attention to detail...?

Yes. There was a discrepancy in preparedness and expectation. In Israel, there is a political consensus — that stretches from Likud through Labour to most of Meretz — that Israel must always preserve the upper hand, not only in war, but also in diplomacy.

Whether we are talking about Oslo or the Camp David agreements, Israel sought to ensure in both that the balance of power that obtained before the agreements would be preserved after the agreements. Israel will not agree to any peace process that puts itself and the Arab countries on an equal footing, on the level of "strategic parity" as Hafez Al-Assad would put it. This was and is Israel's basic objective in the agreements.

Would you say Israel "won" the diplomatic battle at Camp David as well as in Oslo?

Yes. Given its position in the Arab world, it is clear that Egypt can never be satisfied with "just" a bilateral peace treaty with Israel.

For sure, Camp David ensured that the Sinai was returned and it opened the way to economic relations between Israel and Egypt, but this cannot be the end of the story as far as Egypt is concerned. It also needs a resolution of the Palestinian question.

You imply that Camp David and Oslo are similar agreements, both in their terms and the method of their negotiation. In the West Bank and Gaza, the Oslo model appears to have collapsed. Is this because of a flaw in the model or simply because the Netanyahu government refuses to adhere to its terms?

I believe it is the former. As far as the Palestinians are concerned, both Camp David and Oslo were inherently flawed agreements. And this is because both accepted Israel's definition of the essence of the conflict in Palestine.

The Israeli view is that the conflict stems from the 1967 war and that the subject that has to be addressed are those Palestinians living in the territories occupied in 1967. The corollary of this interpretation is that if Israel lifts the occupation from parts of the West Bank and Gaza and transfers autonomy to the Palestinians there, then you are on the road to resolving the problem.

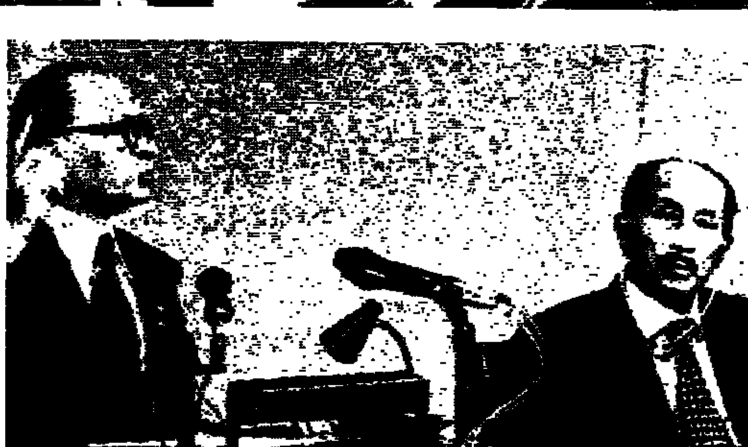
What is wrong with this interpretation is that it suppresses the real cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which in my view is not the territories occupied in 1967, but those issues still unresolved from the 1948 war. For a Palestinian in Ain Helweh in Lebanon or Yarmouk in Syria or in any of the refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza the problem is not whether they are governed by an Arab country, Israel or the Palestinian Authority (PA). The problem is their repatriation to their homes in what is now Israel.

This problem was marginalised in the Camp David and Oslo agreements, by the Palestinian and Arab sides as much as by the Israelis. The same applies to the questions of Jerusalem and of a Palestinian state. The issue of the nature and extent of a Palestinian state does not derive from the 1967 war, but from as far back as 1947 and the UN partition plan.

Thus, through the Camp David and Oslo agreements, Israel managed to out-negotiate the Egyptians and the Palestinians into accepting its conceptualisation of the conflict. It is no wonder that such agreements eventually disintegrate.

In this sense, I would not say that Netanyahu has buried Oslo. He merely accelerated its demise.









History unfolds before the camera's eye, as Begin introduces the President of Egypt to the Israeli Knesset (above and below left). The unexpected visit passed off in an atmosphere of evident elation far-removed from the tensions of today, witness this picture of the two leaders leaving the King David Hotel in Jerusalems (far right).

Making a kind of history

Azmi Bishara, Palestinian member of the Knesset, recalls demonstrating outside its walls while Sadat was addressing the Israeli parliament, and ponders the significance of the visit, then and now



"At the time of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, I was a student at the Hebrew University and head of the Arab students' committee. At first, the news was shocking to us: we could not believe that it was really happening. We heard Sadat's speech to the Egyptian parliament, when he announced he would go anywhere for peace, even Jerusalem. At first, we all thought that it was a new manoeuvre, but when Menachem Begin immediately issued an invitation to Sadat, we knew that something critically important was going on. Something that was completely new to us, which we were not accustomed to.

"The leader of the greatest Arab state, Egypt, was coming to Jerusalem! Of course, the word "treachery" could be heard everywhere, in the streets and among intellectuals, especially in the nationalist circles in which I moved. However, I never used this term myself: I believe it is more appropriate for spies and double agents. Here, there was no trace of deception in the deed. After closer analysis, I saw the event as the natural outcome of a regime which had chosen to adopt strategies that would serve its own interests. That is not treason — on the contrary.

"Sadat had adopted a new line after the death of his predecessor Gamal Abdel-Nasser, and following on from his victory in the 1973 October War. He had arrived at certain conclusions which prompted him to forcibly propel the Middle East into a new era. As we all know, Egypt has the political weight to initiate new developments unaided. Of course, we thought about organising demonstrations to express our disapproval, but then the Arab states began to air their protests, and we began to look for something more concrete — something like the Steadfastness and Resistance Front.

"We watched the Arab summits on television, but I did not take those meetings seriously. I felt that the Arab cause was a lost cause, even though I fought for it as an idealistic student activist. We started by arranging a demonstration in front of the Knesset on the same day Sadat was expected to be there. Yet it seems that we failed to anticipate how determined the Israelis would be to make the visit a success. Nobody was allowed to spoil the day. The demonstrations were dispersed and Israeli police assaulted us with sticks. However, the visit and its conclusion at Camp David occupied a large place in our thoughts.

"Later on, I heard a recording of Sadat's speech in the Knesset, and my impression then, as before, was that there was no treachery, but rather a new vision of the interests of the Egyptian regime. This vision took it as its prerogative to abandon the common Arab front and cave in to US hegemony. However, Sadat's language at that time was not submissive; on the contrary, it was full of pride. He used words like "a just peace" and "a just solution" for the Palestinians and he laid down in his speech the outline of how they might be achieved. I believe that apart from the Shakespearean pathos of his language — we all know his tendency to grandiloquence — Sadat declared then certain conditions which he later retracted at Camp David, when he spoke of autonomy for the Palestinians. This was the beginning of an intimate relationship between Egypt and Israel, which led the Egyptian regime to adopt an anti-Arab language — a Pharaonic language which promoted Egyptian isolationism. It was that language which showed that Egypt had abandoned the Palestinian cause.

"Save for his rhetoric, Sadat had actually destroyed the possibility of a confrontation with Israel. Compare the strong language used by Sadat in the Knesset and the submissive language used by Palestinians: there is a vast difference between the two. Sadat was the leader of a great country, speaking with Israel on an equal footing, and consequently he was treated respectfully. That was not the case with the Palestinians.

"After 20 years, my judgement on the visit is the same: I still believe that it was a crucial and significant event as we believed at the time. As time passes, that significance is not diminished. The memory remains vivid: I recall the tense mood inside the Knesset and the terrible confusion among Arabs and Palestinians. In short, it was an historic occasion.

"I do not think that Sadat was a visionary. On the contrary he was a small-time politician, not a statesman in the true sense of the word. I do not see his visit as an impulsive adventure; rather it was a well-calculated move coming after a period of intense contacts. Egypt wanted to avoid further fighting, align itself with the West and regain Sinai.

"Sadat knew that the West was more powerful than the Soviet bloc. Reactionary forces had already bet on the West as the ultimate winner in the international political arena. But they did not adapt themselves to the Western way of thinking. For a right-wing leader from the Third World to actually make that bet on the ground is not in itself a virtue, if he does not adopt Western democracy.

"Betting on US supremacy does not require a superior intellect. The power of the US was crystal-clear after 1967. Incidentally, Nasser did not antagonise the US intentionally — he was forced into it. The rift between Nasser and the US arose because Washington was against any nationalist project in the Third World. It was not because Nasser lacked a vision. Nasser was forced to look for friends in the Soviet bloc.

"Sadat, on the other hand, resorted to the West because he chose to give up on the Arab National Project. If Sadat had held on to the Arab National Project, the West would have rejected his overtures. We should not exaggerate what Sadat did. Sadat was no visionary. The Soviet bloc disintegrated because of the rot within the socialist system: the regimes were state capitalist, not democratic. Sadat made it harder to imagine a better future for the Arabs. He helped bury the Arab nations' aspirations. This explains why the West and Israel attempt to depict Sadat as the man who first saw the light.

"Though Sadat's visit began the process of recognising Israel across the region, it was not the event that sealed the fate of Israel as a permanent entity in the Middle East. Israel's permanence was argued for above all by its victory in 1967, which gave the West the impression that the State of Israel was a credible project. It was then that investments from all over the world were channeled towards Israel. After that, it did not take the Israelis long to manufacture nuclear weapons and to attain absolute military superiority in the region.

"Sadat's visit reinforced Israeli superiority by granting Israel its first legal recognition by an Arab state. Other Arab leaders like Tunisia's Habib Bourguiba and King Hussein of Jordan were eager to do what Sadat did, but they lacked Egypt's political weight. Egypt dealt with the problem as if it were a purely Egyptian-Israeli issue — it ignored what was known as the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was the most pernicious aspect of the visit. The Arab-Israeli conflict was no longer seen as a Western or Israeli struggle against the Arab National Project — instead, it came to be viewed as a struggle between Israel and individual Arab states such as Egypt, Jordan or Syria."

Interviewed by ***Sherine Bahaa***

Sadat's elusive dream

In November 1977, Sadat went to Israel to try and break down the psychological barrier between Arabs and Israelis and establish peace in the region. But as **Dina Ezzat** reports, his dream remains elusive 20 years later

The peace process is in a serious deadlock. According to insiders and observers, very little progress can be expected unless Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu miraculously decides to abandon his present intransigence or the US takes steps to pressure him forcefully to show more flexibility towards the peace process.

"It has been over 15 months since Netanyahu was sworn in, and since that day there has been no serious development — despite the brief moments of optimism. The picture at the moment looks very bleak," said one source. He added, "I cannot speculate on what is going to come, but I see no evidence of progress".

The problems remain the same: Netanyahu's insistence on building Israeli settlements in Arab-occupied territories, the reluctance of the international community to persuade him to do otherwise, and the inability of the Arab countries to change this situation.

"The situation is very simple: what has been taken by force, as late President Nasser said, can only be retrieved by force; and force does not necessarily mean military action, but primarily political influence," said political analyst Mohamed Ouda.

Ouda believes the main problem with the peace process is that it rests on the wrong basis.

He explained that following the defeat of 1967, Nasser formulated a plan of action to reverse the defeat. The main elements were to rebuild a strong army equipped with modern weapons and technology and which would have greater political awareness; to establish close relations with the Soviet Union, Egypt's major source of armament supplies; to unify all the Arabs behind the cause of fighting to liberate occupied Arab land, both those who would send armies and those who were prepared to contribute politically and financially; and to create an international climate of support for Arab rights.

According to Ouda, it was on this basis that Egypt was able to make the war of attrition a first step towards reclaiming the rights it had lost. It was this that made the 1973 October War victory possible.

"But then Sadat came. He went to Jerusalem and simply threw away everything that constituted our force. He ignored the simple fact that peace is not about good intentions, but a balance of power," said Ouda.

The visit of late President Anwar El-Sadat to Jerusalem and his speech before the Knesset in November 1977 were, by any standards, a peculiarly baffling incident for most of the observers and officials who witnessed this supposedly impossible act. In their memoirs, officials such as former Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi and Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel — who both resigned over Sadat's conduct of the peace negotiations with Israel — and informed observers like Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, all discuss at length the lack of preparations and consultations before the visit. Their detailed accounts support the view that everything was indeed being put together on the spur of the moment.

The reaction to the visit in Egyptian intellectual and diplomatic circles was extremely divided. There were those who saw Sadat as a visionary who went for a deal with the Israelis because he knew there had to be one. But many were seriously concerned about the methods he pursued in reaching that deal.

"Sadat went to Israel 'naked' of political and public support," argued Ouda. "He put himself in a very vulnerable position, he declined to give any serious consideration to the advice of his aides and hence regional peace was born too prematurely to be able to grow as a healthy entity".

Ouda rejects the argument that had the Arabs supported, rather than rejected, Sadat's initiative at the time, the Egyptian president could have secured a lot more from Israel than that which the Palestinians and Syria are now trying to get. Ouda argues that by neutralising Egypt's role in the region, Sadat had promoted the power imbalance in favour of Israel that still obtains today.

Moreover, according to some Arab diplomats involved in the current peace process, Sadat's "negotiating generosity" taught the Israelis bad habits. They now expect Arab negotiators to "give them outright what they want, even before the negotiations are seriously underway," said a diplomatic source.

According to one insider, "Sadat gave in to the Israelis very early on in the game". In his analysis, Israel did not really want Sinai. What Israel really wanted from Egypt at that stage, he said, was two things: to end the state of war and to recognise Israel as a people and a state. "These he gave them by agreeing the second disengagement agreement [signed a few months after the war] and by going to visit them in Jerusalem," he explained.

Since then, some sources argue the Israelis have very much had their own way with peace-making in the Middle East.

According to one source, "Sadat achieved something for Egypt". He secured one of the basic factors in its national security, which is its sovereignty over its own land, "irrespective of the argument that Egypt does not have full control over Sinai because Sinai was restored through an international agreement and all agreements between countries imply some form of restriction over the exercise of power by the national governments".

The source added: "But what he really failed to do was to get Egypt another basic factor in its national security: namely stability in the region, particularly in the immediately neighbouring countries — which are now involved in peace-making efforts with the Israelis".

At the time, Sadat was not only promising peace and national security. He was also talking of breaking what he dubbed the "psychological barrier" between Arabs, particularly Egyptians, and Israelis, and of making the peace deal with Israel the foundation of economic prosperity for the Egyptians. "And in this he certainly did not succeed," said Nader Fergani, director of Al-Mishkat Centre for Research and Training.

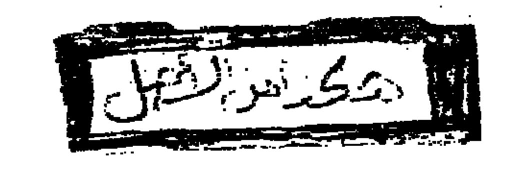
"Poverty and deprivation in Egypt have actually worsened," said Fergani. He added: "Sadat kept saying that our economy was below zero, arguing for peace-making with Israel and the open-door policy that aimed to integrate us into the international capitalist market". The end result, though, is that "there is more poverty today than there was in 1975".

Moreover, the Egyptian people in general still feel that "the psychological barrier" between them and the Israelis is largely intact. A poll jointly conducted by *Al-Ahram Weekly* and Al-Mishkat in late 1994, revealed a very high level of opinion on the issue of normalisation of relations with Israel. Indeed, less than 10 per cent of the 1,500 Egyptians of 18 years of age and older polled said they had no opinion on the matter.

The majority of respondents expressed disapproval of normalisation of relations with Israel.

According to Fergani, this kind of reply came at a time when the peace process was widely reported both by the government and in the mass media to be doing well. "Had we conducted this poll a couple of months ago when the government and its media were admitting that the peace process is not working, we would have had even more negative results".

For Fergani the reasons behind these sentiments are very simple and down-to-earth. People are gaining nothing by the peace process, and they cannot imagine that the Palestinians are gaining anything substantial either.



Days of wine and roses

Sadat's visit to Jerusalem electrified the world — the second stage in a shock strategy that had begun with the 1973 War. Maurice Guindi, who covered the visit firsthand, remembers what he saw, heard and felt

In my 44 years of reporting for international wire services I covered many exciting and even epoch-making events. But none of them could compare with President Anwar Sadat's 44-hour visit to Israel on 19-21 November 1977 — a political earthquake that shook the world, numbed the Arabs and opened a new chapter in Middle Eastern history.

As it transpired later, Sadat had been pondering the idea of the visit for several months, during which he had discreetly sounded out certain key world leaders whose responses had been encouraging. Once he had made up his mind, he announced his plan from Egypt's highest forum, the People's Assembly, in a few tantalising words.

Addressing a packed chamber at the opening of a new parliamentary session on 9 November, he vowed to "go to the end of the world, even to the Knesset" in order to spare "even a single soldier of mine" injury in a war. There was loud applause from his audience, among them Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who happened to be in Cairo at the time. But almost everybody, including Arafat and even the Egyptian cabinet ministers, took Sadat's words as a figure of speech intended to underline his keen desire for peace.

The next few days saw much hectic diplomatic activity. Sadat met a group of US congressmen two days after his speech and told them, to their amazement, that he was serious about the visit. US Ambassador Herman Eilts, who was on hand, emerged from the meeting looking dazed and told me: "I think the president means it. I can hardly believe it." Sadat later told Eilts privately that he would go to Israel immediately if he received an official invitation.

The then Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin obliged, and on the afternoon of Saturday, 19 November, Sadat flew to Israel.

I was assigned to cover the visit and I found myself among a group of international journalists travelling to Israel on a special flight chartered with the help of the Egyptian State Information Service. We winged our way to Israel on a Yugoslav airliner a few days before Sadat was due to set off. The first tingling of the nerves came when we saw through the plane windows a cluster of lights below which, we were told, were Ben Gurion Airport.

As we strained our eyes to see, we heard a clinking sound. Two beaming stewardesses walked into the cabin bearing trays of champagne in honour of what they called the first direct commercial flight from Cairo to Ben Gurion since Israel's creation in 1948.

There were hurrahs, handshakes and back-slapping all round as everybody, including the cabin crew, sipped their champagne. On our arrival, we were treated as VIPs. Israeli officials provided a car to take me to Tel Aviv, where I was to link up with my wire service colleagues. I arrived at 3.30am at the Plaza Hotel. A drowsy clerk greeted me at the desk, indifferent at first, but when I wrote "Egyptian" on my check-in card, he almost hit the roof. He pumped my hand, then dashed behind the front office and woke up napping colleagues who hurried to welcome me. I was the first Egyptian ever to stay in their hotel. I couldn't sleep that night, the thrill was too much. Instead I just sat at my typewriter, composing a detailed account of the trip.

Shortly after 8am the next morning, I buzzed the telephone operator for a line to call my office. Instead of the reply I expected — "Yes, Sir?" — I heard the excited voice of a girl asking: "Are you the Egyptian?" Already word of my presence was spreading like wildfire!

As I left the hotel, the taxi driver looked at me in his mirror and asked where I came from. On hearing I was Egyptian, he turned to shake my hand; for a split second he lost control of the wheel and almost smashed into a pavement.

When I returned to the hotel later in the day I was deeply moved by the sight of a red rose on the table next to my bed and with it a note in Arabic saying: "From the heart... for peace." It was signed "from your chambermaid". I discovered later that she was a Palestinian.

At Ben Gurion Airport, just before Sadat's arrival, I was among a group of American and European correspondents many of whom still doubted that Sadat would indeed be on the plane.

"I'll believe it when I see Sadat emerging from the plane," an American reporter friend told me.

And emerge Sadat did, with a serious look on his face which soon bloomed into a smile as he shook hands with a long reception line that included every political and military leader in Israel.

We knew then we were there to see history in the making, and we were not disappointed. Sadat and Begin emerged from their first meeting hand in hand, proclaiming : "No more wars." Then we heard them call each other "friend." In the Knesset, the following day Sadat delivered an eloquent appeal for peace, and Begin reciprocated.

"You want to live with us in this part of the world and, in all sincerity, I tell you we welcome you among us, with full security and safety," Sadat told the hushed assembly of legislators. "This in itself is a tremendous turning point, one of the landmarks of a decisive historic change. We used to reject you. We had our reasons and our claims, yes. We refused to meet you anywhere, yes...

"This has happened. Yet today I tell you, and I declare it to the whole world, that we accept living with you in permanent peace based on justice. We do not want to encircle you, or be encircled ourselves, by destructive missiles ready for launching, nor by the shells of grudges and hatred. I have said it on more than one occasion: Israel has become a *fait accompli*."

Sadat observed that he had broken every tradition and every precedent by taking the initiative of visiting Israel, and that many people had been shocked to the point of doubting his intentions. But he stressed that his decision to make the visit was "the true expression of my people's will and intentions."

"I came here to deliver a message," he concluded. "I have delivered the message and may God be my witness."

It was striking to witness the reaction of ordinary Israelis on seeing Sadat among them and hearing his words as he offered them this olive branch.

The visit jolted them out of a tense war climate. They began to relax. An old woman whom I met at an Israeli Kibbutz said that when she saw Sadat on television addressing the Knesset, "it felt like I was reaching out for the moon and actually touching it."

The journalist Philip Gillon wrote an article for the *Jerusalem Post* after Sadat's departure in which he gave his impressions of the mood in Israel during the visit. In his plane seat on the way home, Gillon speculated, President Sadat "may well have said to himself the Arabic equivalent of *'veni, vidi, vici'* — I came, I saw, I conquered. With one possible slight amendment — 'I came, I was seen and heard, I conquered.' Israelis are a volatile people, quick to fall in love, and there can be no doubt that Anwar Sadat has won many hearts."

Sadat was also warmly received by Palestinians at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque when he joined them in Bairam prayers on the second day of his visit. And this despite the Palestinian leadership's vehement condemnation of his initiative.

Yet the visit was only the first step in what would prove to be an uphill struggle at the negotiating table, a battle of words waged in a climate totally at variance with the euphoria that had surrounded Sadat's stay in Jerusalem. It was these negotiations which led to the signing of a peace treaty on 26 March 1979.

Israel completed withdrawal from Sinai under the provisions of the treaty three years later. But the Israelis doggedly held on to Taba, a one-square-kilometre enclave at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, for the next seven years, during which negotiations came to naught. The issue was finally settled in Egypt's favour by the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Egypt regained Taba and President Hosni Mubarak raised the Egyptian flag there in 1989.

In retrospect

The impetus provided by the visit to Jerusalem, or the Camp David agreement, died out long ago, writes Amin Hewedy. So who will liberate Jerusalem?

On 9 November 1977, President Sadat declared to the People's Assembly that he was ready to go to Jerusalem to discuss peace. The welcoming response to the visit came on 10 November, and with it Begin's assertion that Israel rejected any suggestions of withdrawal to the 1967 lines and opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state. On 11 November, Begin sent a message to the Egyptian people saying, "You are our neighbours, and shall remain so." On 15 November, Begin addressed an official invitation to Sadat to visit Jerusalem. On 16 November, Sadat went to Damascus to consult with Hafez Al-Assad, but their talks did not yield any concrete results regarding the visit to Jerusalem. On 19 November 1977, Sadat landed in Jerusalem, where he stayed at the King David Hotel and received a gift on the occasion of the birth of a grandchild. On 20 November, he delivered his famous address to the Knesset and flew back to Cairo. The visit metamorphosed the entire scene in the region: the genie had broken free from the bottle.

In many capitals, behind-the-scenes manoeuvres had been conducted with the aim of securing approval of the visit itself, not necessarily of its outcome. I was told by one of Austrian President Kreisky's advisers that, on learning of the visit, the leader said words to the effect that: "This is typical of Sadat; once before he expelled the Soviet experts on the eve of the October War without cashing in. Now that the war is over, he is visiting Israel for nothing."

Sadat's visit to Jerusalem was his own decision. Whatever moves he made prior to the visit were intended to gauge possible reactions; receiving no encouragement whatsoever, he proceeded single-mindedly on his venture.

Like any head of state, whether mandated by revolutionary or constitutional legality, Sadat was under no obligation to heed the advice of his aides. He took his decision rapidly and assumed full responsibility for its consequences. A president is like a marble slab, on which victories and defeats are inscribed.

Certain high officials have claimed that Sadat had disclosed his plan to the National Security Council, which gave it a seal of approval. But the claim is highly dubious; Sadat stated categorically in his autobiography, *In Search of Identity*, that he took the decision to visit Jerusalem alone and that he was responsible for its outcome. Sadat usually listened intently to his advisers, tight-lipped, nodding frequently as though in approval of whatever he was hearing; in fact, his thoughts were far away, and his mind already made up.

I do not subscribe to the view that Sadat acted on impulse, without due deliberation. He was not one to act on the spur of the moment. His reactions were never rash nor impulsive; like an old fox, he studied the scene intently, reading every move. He knew the magnitude of the defeat of 1967, and realised that it dictated a change in strategy in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

He was aware of the fact that, by losing the war, Egypt and the other front-line Arab countries had lost their distinctive strategic position. The loss of Sinai, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and Jebel Al-Sheikh meant that buffer zones and strategic vantage positions were lost. One of the few who had read the situation thoroughly, he was profoundly conscious that the October War had to come to a political end, and it did so, as he had envisaged. He succeeded in exploiting to the maximum the outcome of the war during the four years preceding his visit to Jerusalem; by then, the disengagement agreement and the Geneva treaty had already exhausted all the leverage resulting from the war. It became evident to Sadat that a new impetus was needed to boost the situation, which had reached a new deadlock.

He conceived of two possible plans. Another military clash was not feasible after his rift with the Soviets and the huge depletion of military force, in terms of both men and equipment, in the wake of the October 1973 War, and given the world community's exasperation at the no war-no peace situation, which had loomed for too long. The other option was the blitzkrieg visit to Jerusalem. In under 40 minutes, he was face to face with the Israelis who had fought us for three long decades. At the airport stood Sharon, who during the October War masterminded the breach of Egyptian lines at Defreswar, north of Suez, through which Israeli forces crossed to the western bank of the Suez Canal. Sadat addressed him jokingly: "If you ever cross over to our side again, you will become our prisoner." Sharon replied: "This will never happen, because I am now minister of agriculture!"

Only Sadat could have taken this initiative. Anyone else would have sat, frozen to the seat of his plane, unable to open the door and step onto the tarmac. But then, Sadat spent most of his life halfway between reality and fantasy.

On one occasion, he is said to have been sitting with Begin in Geziret El-Fursan in Ismailia, smoking his pipe. Suddenly, he clutched his guest's hand and exclaimed "I feel it is all a dream, and that we are sitting on the surface of the moon; do you feel it this way?" Begin quickly withdrew his hand, replying: "Yes indeed, Mr President, but I also feel that we must return to earth rapidly, because staying too long on the moon is life-threatening." Despite his reiterations that his visit to Jerusalem had brought down the "wall of fear" and that the October War was the last war which would ever be fought between Israel and the Arabs, Sadat spent two long years in crippling negotiations with the Begin government. US pressure on Israel never had any real impact on the negotiations — at least, not until the situation exploded in Tehran, which pushed fears of threats to US interests in the region to the surface.

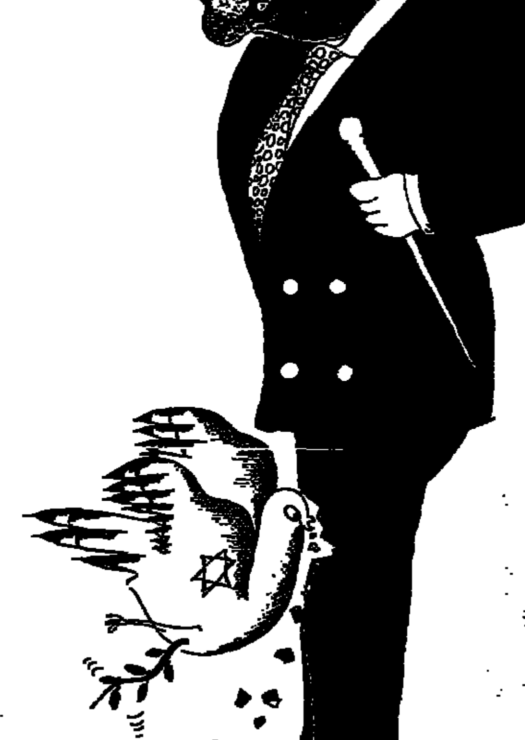
It was this concern for security in the region which prompted the US president to put aside his numerous commitments and devote 13 long days to winding up the Camp David accord. Sadat saw this as an opportunity which he could not afford to miss, especially since his visit to Jerusalem had already served its purpose, and a new impetus was needed. The winds of change from Tehran were the direct cause of the change in US policy and the adoption of the "linkage" strategy. At three in the morning, an exasperated Carter told an intransigent Begin: "This is not only Sadat's opinion, but the US's too, and you must accept." Carter pursed his lips, seized the papers and put down the pen. His blue eyes glowing with anger, he repeated: "You must accept!" Begin replied: "Please, Mr President, there is no need for threats!" He conceded, however.

Twenty years after the signing of Camp David, and 16 years after the death of Sadat, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon are still occupied, and the West Bank and Jerusalem are under Israeli rule. The Israeli prime minister constantly repeats that Israel will not cede any of the territory under its control; nor, he assures the world, will it make any compromises.

Egypt, however, was able to negotiate a deal re-establishing its sovereignty over Sinai. Instead of digging trenches and fortified positions, irrigation canals are being dug in Sinai to convert the arid deserts into arable land. Airports are built, not for military aircraft, but for tourists visiting one of the most attractive resorts in the world. Sinai today is teeming with workers busy extracting its mineral resources. Not everybody is happy, however.

Peace today is as distant as ever. Previous endeavours have failed, but Jerusalem is till waiting for some new force to free it from Israeli domination. A new force is needed to boost the peace process, on the basis of the exchange of land for peace.

The writer is former minister of defence and chief of general intelligence.



20 years of forgetting

When President Sadat travelled to Jerusalem, writes Tahseen Bashir, he was teaching us to build together. It is a lesson we must learn again



This week marks the 20th anniversary of the late President Sadat's visit to Israel, and his speech before the Knesset. What did that visit mean, and what have its consequences been?

Prior to this visit, the peace process was stagnant. US President Jimmy Carter had asked Sadat to be patient, to wait for better times. But Sadat wanted to create better times himself, in order to foster a climate more conducive to an effective peace process.

He thought that the Israeli public had lost enthusiasm and dynamism as well as the willingness to accept new ideas that would break the deadlock and allow for a fresh start. He believed that what he had achieved on 10 October 1973 had to be regained, but this time by peaceful means. Visiting the Israelis in their homeland, addressing them from their parliament, and conveying a balanced, sensitive Arab position on how to deal with the conflict: these were his ideas on how to break the deadlock.

With this visit, Sadat created a new climate, not only psychologically more amenable to peace, but one which made the Israelis think about the consequences if peace were to fail. He allowed them to understand that the policy of occupation and dictating terms of peace or war to the Arabs was not an effective policy, even for the Israelis. He did not wait for the superpower to act, but created conditions that made it impossible for the US *not* to act.

Twenty years on, we find ourselves in a state of despair over the peace process, with people fussing over whether to go to Doha — another result of the peace process — or not. The Israeli political community is stagnating once more. The equilibrium that has been achieved must be shifted, and changed.

It needs to move in order to allow new factors to come to the surface. What is needed is a new initiative, taken by the Arabs and hopefully the Israelis, to prove once again that a policy of the strong dictating to the weak, and the oppression of the Palestinians, will not do. Sooner or later, the only solution will be to excavate, once more, a policy of peace.

To ask whether the Palestinians should have climbed aboard the peace train twenty years ago, in light of the difficulties they are facing now, comes too late in the day. Even if they had accepted, the Israelis had not yet awoken to the need to recognise the need for peace with the Palestinians, not only the Arabs. Peace with the Arabs can only be achieved through peace with the Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, contrary to all logic, is trying to make peace with the Arabs while occupying Palestinian land.

If anything has become clear in the past 20 years, it is that, even with difficult, reluctant, obstinate leaders like Netanyahu, peace is inevitable. There is no way that Israel, even with its nuclear power, economic advantage and US support, cannot keep the Palestinians forever under occupation. It cannot continue to colonise territory, to construct new settlements or occupy old ones.

In order to break out of this impasse, we have to innovate as peoples. Palestinians, Egyptians, Israelis and Arabs of different nationalities have to bring the cause of peace a greater dynamism than this morbid procedure. The US envoy, sent to activate the process, does no such thing. And on it goes.

The majority of the Israeli people still prefer peace; the Palestinians and the Arabs overwhelmingly want peace. What is lacking is a moral and a political awakening to shake ourselves out of apathy and into activism. If we do that, we will see the day on which the Palestinian will be able to empathise with the agonies and fear of the Jews, as well as the day on which the Israelis come to empathise with and understand the fears of the Palestinians — the "other victims" of the holocaust.

Activism on the levels of human sentiment and morality, however, must accompany the political initiative. This will show young Israelis that their apathy is allowing Israel to drift to the right, which makes it possible for them to imagine that they can take over the Palestinians as a conquered nation.

We need a peace not for the conquered and the vanquished, but a peace of the brave and of the wise, which can see that the best possibility for Palestinians, Arabs and Israelis, Muslims, Christians and Jews, is to work together honestly to make this conflict something of the past. We must create a Middle East in which we can empathise with each other, worry about each other's fears and build together. Building together is the only hope for a stable and fair Middle East. The Arabs cannot contribute to civilisation, and nor can the Israelis — unless they work together.

Isiah Berlin gave us, before he died, another reminder that the only "choice" we have is to work for peace. Let us work together, in harmony and unison. This is the lesson of the visit to Jerusalem, 20 years ago. It is a lesson that needs to be repeated if the dream solution is to become a complete reality.

The writer is a veteran Egyptian diplomat, and a former official spokesman for President Sadat.





Sadat says his final adieux to Begin as he prepares to embark on his journey home (far left). En route for Cairo, he glances out of the cabin at the Israeli military escort (left)

MENA: dead but not buried

Israel walked away in despair, the few Arab states which attended shied away from hosting the next conference and the US fumed at its thwarted plans

Apart from an agreement signed with Jordan to set up a joint industrial zone in Irbid, the 100 strong Israeli delegation left the fourth Middle East North Africa Economic Conference (MENA) in Qatar despondent, isolated and empty-handed. It was a far cry from the "new Middle East" trumpeted at previous conferences in Casablanca, Amman and Cairo.

The tone had been set with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy's decision last week not to show up in Doha "due to the economic nature of the conference." This was a diplomatic way for Levy to avoid again having to take the political flak for his government's policies in the region. But it left US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, as the only foreign minister in attendance, furious at Israel's insouciance. "It's logical that the Netanyahu government would show solidarity for the Arab rejectionist front," quipped one US State Department official in the Israeli daily, *Ma'ariv*, last Saturday.

More trouble came in the conference's final communiqué. Despite Israeli attempts to word it otherwise, the communiqué called for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the agreed formula of land for peace and condemned Israel's closure policies in the West Bank and Gaza. Nor was there any mention of a venue and date for the next conference, fueling speculation that the Qatar get together may well be the last.

Israel's delegation head — Industry and Trade Minister, Natan Sharansky — tried to put a brave face on the debacle by commenting that "it's easy to be loved when you do everything they [the Arabs] expect of you. Disappointment occurs the minute you defend your interests, because expectations were far too high."

The view of Israel's Labour-led opposition was eloquently expressed in an editorial from the *Ha'aretz* newspaper on Sunday. "The economic conference in Doha... will find few participants who attended the Casablanca and Amman conferences. The Israeli delegation will also be low profile... The most important regional economic-political event, which, until now, symbolised an expected era of peace, will this year reflect its fading."

Doha was a fiasco. "Thanks, but no, thanks" was the unanimous reply each Arab delegate gave when offered to host the next Middle East and North African gathering.

At previous MENA summits such as those held in Casablanca, Amman and Cairo, the venue for the next meeting is usually announced before the closure of the annual conference.

Ironically, the only venue suggested for the 1998 conference was Bethlehem in the West Bank. Sharansky had the audacity to offer Bethlehem as the venue without even consulting the Palestinian Authority. According to one diplomat, the United States was trying to convince Oman, Tunisia or Turkey to host the next meeting. However, the whole issue was postponed to be discussed in January 1998 by the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The Qatar conference was supposed to encourage Arab and Israeli businessmen to aid the peace process through trade and investment, but with the Middle East peace process "at a dead-end" to quote Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, 13 out of the 22 Arab states boycotted the Doha conference.

For its part, the World Economic Forum, the organisers of the MENA economic summits, stated that the absence of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Morocco has negatively affected participation in the Doha conference.

Egyptian businessman Shafiq Gabr, a member of the US-Egyptian Presidents' Council, an advisory group formed to smooth economic relations between Egypt and the US, expressed his disappointment that the conference was held at such a critical juncture.

Gabr, who was an active participant in the three previous MENA conferences, said that Doha was doomed when Egypt announced that it would boycott Doha.

"Egypt is the cornerstone of any sustainable regional economic cooperation," said Gabr. "Historically, Egypt has always been leader of the Arab world, Africa and the Middle East region. Politically Egypt pioneered the peace process in the Middle East, and has continued to play a key role."

For Gabr, this conference is very much a contradiction. "I have been supportive of this process of regional economic cooperation in the Middle East provided there exists a political environment that allows it to succeed."

Yet, things seem to have taken a turn for the worse in last week's conference. "Doha is a non-starter, not only on the political level, but also on the business level," said Gabr.

But Egypt's refusal to attend the conference elicited a wave of anger from Qatar. Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Gabr Al Thani devoted most of his one hour news conference to attacking the Egyptian government for its stance against the conference. He also accused Egypt of backing a failed coup in February 1996, a charge which Egypt has totally denied.

Meanwhile, American observers say the failure of the Doha conference may help convince the US administration of the failure of its Middle East policy; trying to force peace through business, rather than through the return of occupied Arab territories.

According to Mamoun Fendy, professor of politics at Georgetown University, "the Doha conference brought the problems of US foreign policy in the region into sharp focus."

For Fendy, "The US has little regard for local realities and insists on imposing its vision. Despite opposition from major allies, the US forged ahead with plans for holding the conference."

Even though US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright insisted on attending the Qatar conference in an attempt to give it a boost, one US official told the *Weekly* that the US administration was aware that "it was still doomed to failure."

"She is attending because she wants to keep her word and promise. But the intention to foster cooperation between the Arabs and Israel was consumed by Washington's confrontation and military standoff with Iraq, in addition to Arab hostility towards Israel's intransigence in negotiations with the Palestinians," added the US official who spoke on condition on anonymity.

Reported by ***Hoda Tawfik*** *in Washington,* ***Graham Usher*** *in Jerusalem,* ***Niveen Wahish*** *and* ***Sherine Bahaa*** *in Cairo.*



'The sweetest of my children'

THIS was one of the last photos taken by *Al-Ahram Weekly* photographer in the West Bank, Khaled Zaghari (top right), before being shot in the leg early this week at the funeral of a Palestinian child killed by Israeli occupation troops. Hundreds of Palestinians took part in the funeral of the eight-year-old Ali Jawarish.

Jawarish was playing with his friends when an Israeli soldier opened fire on a group of Palestinian youths who were throwing stones at troops during a Jewish celebration in the Palestinian town of Hebron 10 days ago. Ali was shot in the forehead by a rubber bullet which penetrated his brain.

Following the incident, Jawarish never regained consciousness. His parents, Leila and Mohamed Jawarish, kept-up an exhausting vigil at Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital. The young boy was declared brain dead, and later that same evening he was taken off the life-support systems.

The boy's parents agreed to donate his organs to anyone who needed them, Jew or Arab. An 18-month-old-Bedouin baby received a kidney; a 12-year-old Israeli Arab boy received a liver and kidney; and a 14-year-old Israeli Arab boy received Ali's heart and lungs.

Jawarish's uncle, Talal, said, "If they [the organs] were given to Jews, I hope they don't become soldiers and shoot someone else."

"He was the sweetest of my children, he was such a good boy," the mother said as she leant against a wall, unable to stand on her own.

In the squalor of the refugee camp on the outskirts of Bethlehem, where Jawarish lived with his parents and six brothers and sisters, the Palestinian child's funeral triggered an outburst of anger and grief.

Ali's body was wrapped in a Palestinian flag with his face exposed and the bullet wound in his forehead distressingly visible.

Clashes continued for hours even after the funeral where the *Weekly*'s photographer Zighary sustained his injury. He was one of six Palestinians shot by Israeli army rubber bullets. Nine others were treated for tear gas inhalation and an Israeli soldier was injured after being struck in the face with a stone.

Numbered days? Arafat's successors

The state of the Palestinian leader's health has provoked interest not just from his doctors, and has raised the inevitable question: who's next? **Graham Usher** reports.

After an inconclusive meeting with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Bern on 15 November, a reporter asked Yasser Arafat how he felt. "How do I look to you?" answered Arafat. The reporter told him — pale, tremulous, with glazed eyes and of slow speech. Clearly embarrassed, Arafat said he had suffered from "a teary eye" ever since his near fatal plane crash in the Libyan desert in 1992. As for the other symptoms, these were just tiredness. "I didn't sleep well last night," said Arafat.

Combined with reports in the Arabic and Israeli press about "succession" tussles in the Palestinian Authority (PA), this exchange and Arafat's sickly appearance in Switzerland have fuelled speculation about the imminence of the Palestinian leader's demise. Nor is it just speculation.

Palestinian sources admit diplomatically that the president "is not as strong as he was", a fact reinforced by accounts of Arafat passing out in meetings twice in the last two months. Israeli analysts have hauled in medical experts to prove that Arafat is in the early stages of Parkinson's disease. Other Palestinians say Arafat's degenerative appearance is directly related to his despair over the peace process, a condition that is unlikely to improve as long as Netanyahu is around.

Yet Arafat's prodigious work rate appears undimmed. Following the Albright meeting, he flew to Cairo for "important talks" with President Mubarak, returned to Gaza to meet a delegation of American academics and, this week, is scheduled to visit India. "Someone who works 22 hours a day is not sick," snapped PA spokesperson, Nabil Abu Rudeina. Israeli intelligence assessments (as quoted in the Israeli press) as well as foreign diplomats agree — the PLO leader's health may be in decline but it is not yet spent.

The fuss is less over Arafat's health than over who among the Palestinian leadership would replace him. And speculation is rife because — 28 years after Arafat took over the reins of the PLO and nearly two years after he was elected president of the PA — there is no obvious successor.

According to the PA's draft Basic Law, the constitutional heir to the presidency would be the Palestinian Legislative Council's (PLC) current speaker, Ahmed Qrei (Abu Alaa). But this law has yet to be ratified by Arafat (some say precisely because it contains this clause). And anyway, Arafat's claim to leadership derives more from his position as PLO chairman than it does from his elective status as president. It is the former appointment that, theoretically, entitles Arafat to represent Palestinians "wherever they reside". The latter position, however, restricts his leadership to the minority of Palestinians who live under the PA's governance in the West Bank and Gaza.

On paper, the most senior figure in the PLO after Arafat is the PLO's head of Political Department, Farouk Qaddumi. Although a founder member of Arafat's Fatah movement, most observers do not see Qaddumi as a serious challenger for the leadership. Opposed to Oslo from the outset, Qaddumi has publicly refused to return to the self rule areas as long as they remain "under Israeli occupation." This absence has prevented him from building any political constituency in the Occupied Territories — an indispensable condition for any future Palestinian leader given the collapse of the PLO "outside".

The current favourite to succeed Arafat is the PLO's head of international relations and chief negotiator, Mahmoud Abbas. Like Qaddumi, Abbas is also a founder member of Fatah. Unlike Qaddumi though, Abbas earned his leadership credentials not from the PLO's battle-grounds of Jordan and Lebanon, but via his role as "overseer" of the PLO-Israeli secret negotiations in 1993 that led to the Oslo Accords.

Abbas represents the most moderate stream of Palestinian nationalism and, as such, enjoys good relations with Israel and the US, both of which deal with him as Arafat's de facto deputy. For the same reasons, Abbas is distrusted by many in Fatah and the PLO opposition and is loathed by the Islamists of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who remember his threat to "demolish their organisations" following the Islamist suicide attacks inside Israel last year. Any move to succession on his part would not enjoy the PLO's preferred decision making mode of "national consensus" and could aggravate existing political divisions, both within the PLO and without.

The alternative to such power struggles would be a succession decided by the popular choice of Palestinians through democratic national institutions outside the Occupied Territories as well as within them. But such institutions have barely begun to be built. For this reason — if for no other — the hope of many Palestinians is that Arafat's days are not as numbered as his shaky appearance suggests.

Washington 'slaps' Netanyahu, softly

Washington is more willing to express dissatisfaction with Israeli policies, but little change is expected from Netanyahu, writes **Dina Ezzat**

When Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu arrived in the US on Sunday for meetings with Jewish American groups, he was faced with a situation almost unprecedented in US-Israeli strategic relations: US President Bill Clinton was unwilling to see him.

The US administration is "getting tired" of Netanyahu's heavy handed approach towards peace negotiations with the Arabs; it is angry with him over the botched Israeli attempt to kill a leading figure of the Islamic Hamas movement in Jordan; and it is infuriated with Israel for refusing to extradite a Jewish American man who killed a friend in the US and fled to Israel where his family resides.

Influential, predominantly Reformist, Jewish groups in the US, are also a little tired of Netanyahu. They are disappointed by his tendency to concentrate religious authority in the hands of orthodox rabbis in Israel, giving them the sole right to answer the controversial question: who is a Jew?

In a meeting with Madeleine Albright in London last week, Netanyahu was reportedly told that the secretary of state was not prepared to push for a meeting between the Israeli leader and US President Bill Clinton once he arrived in Washington.

"This is a serious slap in the face. This is unprecedented and a reason for concern. Netanyahu is causing Israel problems with all its allies," said one Israeli politician.

The Israeli daily, *Yediot Ahronot*, said earlier this month that Clinton administration officials are referring to Netanyahu as "unreliable" and as "someone who does not live up to his commitments.

Washington insiders are quick to point out that Netanyahu was never the Clinton administration's first choice in the 1996 Israeli elections. However, they all agree that he was given normal treatment — similar to that given to previous Israeli leaders — "until he burned too many bridges."

A poll conducted among the overwhelmingly pro-Israel American Jewish community following Albright's September tour of the Middle East, showed that they supported her effort to broker a peaceful settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. They also overwhelmingly supported Albright's recent call for a "time-out" in Israeli settlement expansion.

But what is most upsetting to American Jewry is the current debate in Israel concerning the question: who is a Jew? The current leaning among Israel's more influential rabbis is to suggest that only Orthodox Jews would be considered Jewish under proposed Israeli legislation. Speaking in Indianapolis this week before the Council of Jewish Federation (CJF) — an umbrella of US and Canadian Jewish groups which raises over $30 million each year for Israel's social welfare programmes — Netanyahu sought to placate US Jews over the issue of rabbinic conversions in Israel, insisting that "nobody can deprive a Jew of his Jewishness."

A further indication of the tension in relations between Israel and the US was evident in the US Congress, where it was decided, for the first time since the signing of the Camp David accords in 1979, that part of the annual American aid package to Israel would be frozen. This step was taken in response to Israel's failure to pass on $50 million in US aid to Jordan. Following the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994, Washington has given Jordan an annual aid package of $100 million, an amount which, theoretically at least, is deducted in equal portions from the Egyptian and Israeli aid packages.

The US Congress has also recently threatened to cut part of the annual $3 billion aid package to Israel following a dispute over the extradition to the US of Samuel Sheinbin, a Jewish American teenager who fled to Israel after killing a friend in Maryland, Virginia. Even the US secretary of state has asked Israel to allow the extradition of Sheinbin so that he can face trial in the US, however her requests have so far fallen on deaf ears.

The consensus among observers is that US-Israeli relations are heading for a period of tension. "There is no doubt that this is unusual and unprecedented," said Joel Singer, a former Israeli official. According to Singer, a veteran of the Middle East peace process, recent signals from Washington are "indicative of a US attempt to send a message to Netanyahu that the US expects him to adopt a much more flexible attitude" on peace talks with the Palestinians.

According to James Zogby, director of the Washington-based Arab-American Institute, "There is real concern in the US over Netanyahu's policy because the US is well aware of the broader implications of this policy on its interests in the region and particularly on its allies." Arab states could face serious problems with Islamist militants if the imbalance between Arabs and Israelis was further tipped, Zogby argued.

But is US dissatisfaction likely to influence Netanyahu's hardline policies? Observers and officials are inclined to say no. They argue that it is the Jewish American lobby which actually decides the Clinton administration's Middle East policy. And while this lobby would approve of Washington nudging Netanyahu towards a more conciliatory attitude in the peace process, it is totally opposed to any serious pressure being put on the Israeli government. This view seems to be substantiated by a recent deal between the two countries by which Washington will provide Israel with sophisticated jet fighters.

On the whole, observers seem to agree that Washington's dissatisfaction with Netanyahu's policies is unlikely to have any significant bearing on the peace process. One informed US observer put it this way: "In all likelihood, the US administration will try to maintain the status-quo and convince its Arab allies to show patience" until Washington can get Netanyahu out of office in the coming Israeli elections in the year 2000. (see p.11)

Edited by **Khaled Dawoud**

Democracy Moroccan-style

Morocco's parliamentary polls broadened out the kingdom's political playing field, writes **Gamal Nkrumah**

Last Friday, Moroccans voted in landmark parliamentary elections that promise to usher in a period of greater democracy. "This is a big step forward. It is a critically important development for Moroccan democracy. The king might be obliged to appoint a socialist prime minister," Al-Habib Belkoush, of the Rabat-based Moroccan Organisation for Human Rights told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Over seven million Moroccans, out of 13 million registered voters, turned out to choose between 3,319 candidates from 16 parties at Friday's election. This year's voter turnout figure of 58.30 per cent was slightly down from 1993's legislative election figure, when 62.75 per cent of registered voters participated. Friday's elections will be followed on 5 December by the indirect election of a new upper house. This will be carried out through an electoral college of professional and business associations, trade unions, town councils and regional assemblies.

Morocco has grappled with the idea of introducing a bicameral parliament since the early 1990s. In December 1991, two key political parties, the centre-left Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and the old-guard nationalist party Istiqlal, joined forces to promote the establishment of democratic government *in the kingdom. Their efforts* finally bore fruit in September last year when a new constitution was enacted. This constitution laid down a number of significant reforms. Perhaps the most significant of these reforms was the transformation of the kingdom's former single-house legislature of 333 members into two houses of parliament — a 325-member lower house, the Chamber of Representatives and a 275-member upper house, the Chamber of Councillors.

The state of Morocco's economy was at the forefront of those issues discussed in the lead-up to Friday's election. However other *issues, such as* the role of religion and religious parties in a multi-party democracy and the rights of Morocco's Berber-speaking minorities, also featured *strongly*. Approximately 45 per cent of Moroccans speak one of the kingdom's three Berber languages — Tarifit, Tahilhait and Tamazight. Berber rights parties and regionalist parties had some success at the polls, with the Berber-dominated Democratic and Socialist Movement winning 32 seats.

The majority of Morocco's political parties are allied to one of three broad political groupings — the rightist Wifaq, the leftist Koutla, and the centrist group. In the lead-up to the election, none of the parties within the three separate groupings were able to agree on acceptable coalition arrangements, leaving a multitude of candidates and minor parties to fight the election battle unsupported.

With 102 seats, Koutla emerged as the clear winner of Friday's election even though it failed to command an absolute majority in the Chamber of Representatives. The leftist Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), *the main opposition party* led by Abdel-Rahman Al-Yussufi, won 75 seats. Wifaq's right-wing Constitutional Union and People's Movement won 50 and 40 *seats respectively. The most* important centrist party, the National Rally of Independents won 46 seats. Istiqlal, or Independence Party, which usually runs neck and neck with *USFP had* a poor showing, winning only 32 seats.

Some observers suggest that full democratic representation, *only introduced* in Morocco with last Friday's election, substantially benefited the country's left-wing opposition parties. The lower house of parliament *had* previously been dominated by right-wing parties. However some Moroccans are sceptical as to the democratic benefits derived from this latest election, *believing that the* country still has a long way to go before it enjoys the full bloom of democracy. "The three most pressing problems facing Morocco — soaring unemployment rates, a failing educational system and a debilitating brain drain — were lost in the maze of Moroccan politics. Unemployment officially stands at 16 per cent — youth unemployment is 20 per cent — and the illiteracy rate is a staggering 60 per cent," feminist lawyer Zeinab Maadi told the *Weekly*.

"There were two types of parties contesting the elections. The moneyed type quite literally bought votes because they had nothing meaningful to offer. The other type made up for what they lacked in funds by offering the electorate fresh programmes of action for eradicating poverty, fighting corruption, reducing unemployment, eliminating illiteracy and raising educational standards," Maadi said. "Two women, Bodia Al-Saqally *and Fatema Ben Moden*, both USFP candidates, won seats — the same as in the last elections in 1993."

For the past three decades, King Hassan II has *kept a tight rein on the Mo*roccan political arena, playing left against right and religious against secular parties. But North Africa's only constitutional monarchy has recently been inching towards a more pluralistic and participatory democracy. Today, only militant religious parties are *banned from participating* in the political process. Moderate Islamists now sit in Morocco's parliament, having entered under the umbrella of the country's *secular parties*.

In an unprecedented development, the moderate Islamist party, *Al-Islah wal-Tawhid* (Reform and Unification), worked *closely with the secular*, Popular Constitutional Democratic Movement (PCDM), to win nine seats in the Chamber of Representatives at this *week's election*. In the weeks before the election, the PCDM struck a deal with the moderate Islamist movement, headed by Abdel-Ilah Ben Karan and Mohamed Yatin, that enabled the Islamists to gain a foothold in parliament and at the same time revive the PCDM's political fortunes. The PCDM was a significant political force in the 1960s. However it has long since been eclipsed by newer parties.

During his visit to Morocco last month, South African President Nelson Mandela insisted on visiting long-serving PCDM leader Abdel-Karim Al-Khatib at his home, reviving memories of the days when Morocco was heavily involved in the African decolonisation process. Mandela's special tribute, combined with the *party's alliance with the* moderate Islamists, promises to raise the profile of the PCDM in the Moroccan political arena.

Providing something of a *counterweight to the* expansion of Morocco's democratic institutions, it was reported that Abdel-Salam Yassin, leader of the more militant Islamist justice and charity group, *Al-Adl wal-Ihsan*, is under house arrest in the city of Salé near Rabat.

Finishing off Refah?

Will Turkey's generals manage to close down the Islamist Refah Party? Chances are they will, but there will be a heavy price to pay, reports **Omayma Abdel-Latif**

When the Refah Party's (RP) deputy chairman, Abdullkadir Aksu stood before an audience representing the mainstream of Turkish politics earlier this week, he spoke of Today's Turkey which is implementing policies of oppression and hatred.

"There are," he said, "some people in this country who want to reduce democracy to the level of sophistication of 40 or 50 years ago. Some interested parties want to lynch the Refah," Aksu stated.

Aksu's message was but a reflection of the simmering *discontent* which is raging within the circles of the RP due to the fierce campaign waged against it by the secular ruling elite.

The campaign recently reached new heights when legal action was filed against the RP, demanding the closure of the party and banning its leaders from practicing politics.

The move was seen by many observers as a last-ditch attempt by the secular establishment to bring an end to the rising power of what it claims to be radical Islamic fundamentalism.

The legal action was initiated by Vural Savas, the High Appeals Court chief prosecutor, against the RP last May. An investigation into the case was opened last week, and party leader Necemettin Erbakan was to submit his party's defense petition to the court on Wednesday. Party officials have reportedly said Erbakan will exercise his right to present the defense himself and that he has been preparing his statement. However, a court ruling is not expected before the end of the year.

Savas who presented the court with an indictment in which he explained that political parties based on religious principles ran against the Turkish constitution, said that, "it was time that illegal parties such as the RP should cease to exist on Turkey's political stage."

"The party's activities had violated the law on political parties which therefore permits the closure of parties," said the indictment.

Meanwhile, RP executives have vowed to continue their struggle against the secular establishment. Commenting on the lawsuit, sources inside the party told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that "the party will come out stronger and will emerge unscathed."

"Assuming that politics in Turkey are played on a level playing field and nobody tries to play dirty on such an issue, the party should continue to function," Murat Mercan, a close associate to Erbakan told the *Weekly*.

"I believe we have not done *anything that undermines* Turkish law or advances the cause of Islam for ideological purposes. So if this is a fair trial, the party should not be closed," Abdullah Gul, deputy chairman of the party, said.

The court case is seen as a culmination of a string of actions *taken* against Islamist activities in Turkey.

During the past few months, the row between the RP and the secular establishment has reached catastrophic proportions with the dissolution of the RP-led coalition government last June. The row reached its peak when the military made attempts to issue legislation to ban the establishment of religion-based parties or associations, impose a ban on Muslim sects and orders and put limitations on the financial support to the RP from Islamic-oriented business empires.

The military establishment has come out publicly more than once in favour of a closure of the RP which they claim "has infiltrated the secular *state apparatus*."

But as one Turkish observer noted, the army's growing fears of an Islamist threat were exaggerated because "the generals know very well that Turkish society is not ready to embrace Islamic fundamentalism or toss aside its Western conventions."

He added: "There is a huge difference between political activism and political insurrection but the army does not want to recognise this."

Professor Sami Zubaida, an expert in Middle Eastern studies at London University's Birkbeck, argued that the latest round of friction between the army and the RP may have grave consequences for the future of the country.

"The closure of the party would further alienate its supporters and push them into radicalism rather than into seeking ways to reconcile their differences with the secular state system," Zubaida said.

He pointed out that Turkey's democratic experiment and its relations with the EU were at stake, and that the decision to close the party would highlight that the hidden forces which run the country cannot control their compulsion to interfere in civilian affairs.

"The Turkish generals cannot look beyond their visceral hostility towards the RP, and this is likely to undermine the whole Turkish experience of democracy," Zubaida said.

In his indictment, Savas accused Erbakan of making anti-secular statements. The prosecutor also presented Erbakan's speeches urging RP members to make donations to the private Kanal 7 TV channel as additional evidence indicating that municipalities have been supplying money to Kanal 7 under the veil of aid. Erbakan's labeling of Kanal 7 as the channel of the Jihad against the secularists has given further evidence that Kanal 7 and the RP are two sides of the same coin.

Erbakan will reportedly respond to the claims set forth in the indictment during his verbal defense. In its written defense, the RP maintained that the demand to close down the party was against the law on political parties, the European Convention on Human Rights, various international accords, and the basic principles of Turkish law. It also stated that no party had been closed down in Europe since 1956.

The situation took another twist this week when party leaders engaged in a war of words with Savas over the court case. Sevket Kazan, deputy chairman of the party, accused the prosecutor of submitting his opinion without *examining* the preliminary defense of the RP.

"It shows that the decision to close the party has been cooking for a long time and what is going on is merely a formality," says Kazan.

Refah leaders are, however, prepared for the worst-case scenario, which would be to dissolve the party and form a new party under a different name.

"These procedures are meant to stop Refah from participating in the forthcoming elections and to pave the way for a landslide victory for ANAP [Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's party]. But even if Refah is banned, it will more than likely appear under a different name."

A different name, however, is not all Refah will need at this stage. Observers say a change of ideological orientation should be also considered. "RP should revise its image and become something like a democratic religious party with no inclination to bring about the implementation of *Shari'a* law in Turkey," Zubaida said.



Sultan Qaboos bin Said

Oman: a year of celebration

Throughout the course of the year, the Sultanate of Oman celebrates a number of commemorative occasions, some of which are linked to events in both the past and present history of Oman, while others have an Arab or international significance. Scarcely a month goes by without there being an occasion for celebration, lasting for either a single day, a week, or the whole month.

At the forefront, however, is Oman's National Day, celebrated annually on 18 November, when Omanis renew their commitment to their leader Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, and celebrate their achievements over the past year and anticipate the forthcoming year as another year of the modern Omani renaissance.

Concern for the next generation

The first occasion of the year takes place on 15 January, Gulf Children's Day, which is a day that is celebrated throughout all countries of the Gulf. Children are considered the cornerstone of Omani society, and interest in their health and welfare is one of the top priorities of the Omani government. This concern is shown from the very start, with health services provided to expectant mothers, *while after the birth, every effort* is made to protect the child from disease and allow him to grow up in a safe environment.

Education is yet another important area which has developed in leaps and bounds to equip the new generation. In a historical speech, Sultan Qaboos called for the spreading of education, even if it takes place under the shade of a tree.

Sultan Qaboos' call was quickly responded to with new schools established throughout the country, even in such remote areas like Jebel Al-Akhdar, in the Nizwa province, *providing every child with the op*portunity of an education.

Within the framework of this historical development, the forthcoming period also witnessed the establishment of the Sultan Qaboos University which is considered among the most modern universities.

Oman is keen to strengthen ties between educational institutions and society. Because of this there is an interest in boosting the continuity between students and their local environment. Within this context, Local Student's Week is celebrated each year in the month of February.

Yet the Omani student is not considered the sole element in education and learning, for there is a complementary element exemplified by the teacher. Therefore, to honour the teacher in the same month, 24 February is designated as Teachers' Day, in which society pays tribute to the men and women whose efforts in teaching are for the sake of the new generation.

Protecting the environment

For the sake of mankind's health, the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed distinguished endeavours in environment-related fields. The same holds true for preserving natural wildlife in the Sultanate, which was one of the first Arab countries to have a Ministry of Environmental Affairs.

Emphasis on the relationship between *the municipality and the en*vironment with regards to development has maintained since 1970, with October being the month celebrating municipal environment, during which intensified efforts to promote clean, green areas, and maintain the natural environment takes place.

Omani efforts to protect the environment are commemorated every 8 January on Environment Day. The Sultanate of Oman believes that protection of the environment is not only a local issue relevant only to each individual country, but rather it should *be a global issue that goes beyond* political boundaries and continents, encompassing the whole of mankind.

With that, the Sultanate of Oman *participates in a number of environ*mental occasions celebrated all around the world, from Earth Day on 2 April, to Regional Environment Day on 24 April, and World Environment Day on 5 June.

In the Arab world, the Sultanate is leading a campaign to have 14 October as Arab Environment Day, to which the other Arab countries are responding favourably to this idea.

Two months for agriculture

*Comprehensive economic develop*ment is one of the key interests of the Sultanate, falling within the framework of the five-year plan and lying at the forefront of its policy to diversify internal resources, which rely mainly on petroleum gains, as a prime source of national revenue.

The agriculture sector enjoys an ample share of interest directed at development for the sake of increasing agricultural production. Within this context, Sultan Qaboos made a decision to designate 1988 as the Year of Agriculture, and had decided to carry over the activities of this year into 1989.

To further emphasise the vitality of agricultural activity in Oman, a decision was made to designate two months of every year, February and August, as months devoted to promotion of agriculture.

One of Oman's strategic goals is to realise an adequate yield of prime crops. With that, Oman cooperates with other countries in celebrating *World Food Day on 16 October* of each year, and Tree Day, celebrated on 31 October — both of which are expressions of the deep concern that the Sultanate and its people have in agriculture.

Agriculture is firmly linked with the strategy for water resource development, whereby the Sultanate has witnessed the implementation of plans aimed at expanding dam construction. In addition, the Omani people enthusiastically participate with the government's efforts to conserve water, for the sake of preserving this national wealth from wastage.

Because of this, the Sultanate of Oman celebrates, along with other nations of the world, International Water Day every 22 March.

Two years for industry

Not only is Oman considered a green and agricultural country, it is also considered an industrial one. Since 1970, the Sultanate has witnessed the implementation of a strategy to develop industry by constructing a number of factories and industrial zones.

Industry is considered one of the important streams that flow into the river of development, aimed not only at diversifying monetary resources, but providing job opportunities as well.

Omani production has become similar to that of leading industrial nations, exporting its surplus abroad. Within the framework of mobilising efforts to develop industry, Sultan Qaboos designated 1991 as the Year of Industry, and had extended these activities to the following year. On the lo*cal level, Oman celebrates 9 February* as Industry Day.

Award-winning architecture

Oman is the crossroads for different *styles of architecture, from Arab Islam*ic to contemporary styles. New cities are built is the context of balancing between esthetic beauty and practical living.

It is therefore no surprise that the Sultanate won first place in numerous contests for Arab city planning. The centre of the Omani Foreign Ministry, the Qasr Al-Bustan Hotel, the Municipality Building of Muscat, and Souq Nizwa have won prizes for their outstanding designs.

Within this framework of the importance of architecture, the Sultanate participates with the Arab world in celebrating 15 March of every year as Arab City Day. Likewise, it *celebrates the first Tues*day of October as Arab and International Housing Day. Similarly, the governorate of Muscat celebrates all of November with activities related to Muscat Municipality Month.

Foreign affairs

In the international do*main*, the Sultanate *of* Oman participates with the rest of the world in celebrating 24 October as the anniversary of the United Nations, whose halls and organisations witness the active role of Oman throughout the span of the year, sharing in the important activities *of this international organ*isation.

Another consideration to be taken into account is Oman's interest in providing an open door to the world. This has taken place far from direct diplomatic channels, for it is tied to comprehensive development which took place in the upper part of the country. This is related to the Sultanate's participation in celebrating the international day of the Inter*national Telecommunications Union on* 17 May, and likewise International Postal Day on 9 October.

Since 1970 Oman has witnessed the implementation of plans to develop its telephone network, and likewise postal services, for it is these two important sectors that link together all parts of the country, building a strong bridge between them and the outside world.

The Sultan's Armed Forces

Political analysts agree that the foreign policy of Oman is based on trustworthy principles and sound positioning, which have enabled *it* to *encompass* Arab and *international* changes. The primary axis on which which Omani foreign policy revolves is to maintain security and stability in the Gulf region in particular, and throughout the globe in general. Within this framework, the Sultanate of Oman always calls for peace, and a solution for international issues through negotiation and dialogue, without resorting to violence, and without interfering in *internal affairs*.

Oman firmly believes in the necessity of maintaining regional and international peace, and a solution is not made without resorting to these policies. On this basis, the Sultanate of Oman celebrates the Sultan's Armed Forces' Day on 11 December of each year, in which the public extends its appreciation to its armed forces equipped with the latest technology.

Royal Oman Police

Oman is notably a law-abiding country and there is no organised crime. This is due to the strong influence of *Islamic principles, close family ties and* Omani customs and traditions.

Since the Royal Oman Police was established in 1974, its achievements throughout the nation have had a lasting influence on Omani society, which led to 5 January being Police Day.

Yet the Royal Oman Police's concern not only lies in maintaining security, rather, it offers necessary support to the people of the community, pro*viding timely development in all fields* related to civil defense, protecting society from disasters and fire. In honour of this, the Sultanate of Oman celebrates 1 March as Civil Defence Day.

The extended Omani family

There is no doubt that the most important thing which limits the spread of violence and crime in Omani society are the ties which bind family members togther, within the framework of what is known as the extended Omani family, whose elements work together on a social level to lighten and overcome any obstacles faced by one or *more of its members*.

For example, the Sultanate has witnessed the organisation of festivals especially to raise funds for orphans' associations.

Within the same framework, the handicapped enjoy comprehensive humanitarian, social and medical care, and receive training to encourage them to adjust with their handicaps on *the one hand, and to provide* them with work opportunities on the other.

In consideration of raising public awareness and support, the Sultanate of Oman marks 15 December of each year as Gulf Handicapped Day.

By losing, he has won

Pakistan's moment of glory has come in the aftermath of the struggle between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, writes **Eqbal Ahmad**

Wisdom has prevailed over folly: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has won and by losing, Justice Sajjad Ali Shah has earned his title as the chief justice of Pakistan. The common good and the cause of democracy has been served. What should have been a routine legal matter developed into a grave constitutional crisis. All of last week I was reminded of a well-known fable.

The river was full, and flowing vigorously. The scorpion had to get urgently across as his family were stranded on the land beyond, needing food and care. The scorpion entreated with the frog to take him across the river. The frog, being scared of the scorpion's poisonous fangs, hesitated. But the creature had the gift of persuasion and reason on his side. "How can I hurt you?" he asked the frog "If I bite you, you will die and I shall drown, too." "You speak wisely, scorpion," said the frog. "Fear, foul and irrational, overwhelms me. But I must overcome it." Thereupon, the frog embarked on the journey carrying the lucky scorpion on his back. As they reached midstream, the scorpion plunged his pincers into the back and underside of the frog. "Ouch!", he yelled, "stop biting me as you will drown if I die." "I know", said the scorpion, "But I can't help it. It is my nature." At the expense of stating the obvious, one may offer the moral of the story: Instinct may compel behaviour that is counter to reason. When it does, instinct should be suppressed.

It took weeks, but the prime minister's reason prevailed over instinct, and just in time. In this land of political suicides this is a record. We have reason to celebrate. Sharif's government was swimming quite nicely through the stormy economic and social conditions it had inherited from its predecessor. Then in mid-stream, it began to commit hara-kiri as though driven by tragic nature. A host of political opportunists, particularly of the opposition parties, abandoned caution and considerations of the national interest, to eke out their paltry profits from this constitutional crisis. History shall record these bit players as vultures of a very low order. The prime minister should take note that all his recent bows to obscurantism did not yield even a fraction of gratitude from the obscurantists he has sought to placate. But it has reinforced the sectarianism he has vowed to eradicate.

There is a premium in our political culture on confrontation rather than compromise. Sharif has shown courage in pulling back from the brink. He could have dug in his fangs, drown and be drowned. He did not. He and his cabinet colleagues shall hopefully view this as a victory for reason, not a tactical retreat to be undone at a more opportune time. Democracy in Pakistan has been strengthened by it, and the government has not been weakened by any means. For Sharif to perceive this as a defeat would be self-defeating.

The developments of the last four weeks hold, nevertheless, lessons that all should ponder for this country's sake and for democracy's. The first is that people in high office ought to distinguish between authority and power. Authority — the worthiness to be recognised as legitimate — is the civilising factor behind power, the element that makes the difference between coercing a multitude and governing a society. Power — the ability to get what one wants, or to produce desired changes — progressively degenerates when it is de-linked from authority. The divorce between the two yields dictatorship, tyranny, rebellion, or anarchy. Political instability and military rule in Pakistan have been premised on the absence of linkages between power and authority. The future of democracy in this country rests on our will and capacity to associate power with authority.

Since Plato's time, political theorists have observed that the concentration of power undermines authority. The converse is equally true: institutionalised devolution and separation of powers enhances the authority of the state, the government and those who preside over it. This is the golden rule of good organisation generally. "How do you keep your vast organisation running so smoothly?," I had once asked the head of General Motors Corporation. A prompt reply was delivered: "By allowing maximum autonomy to the managers of our various sectors." He then added ironically: "The communists coined democratic centralism. We practice it." The Soviet Union fell apart not because power was decentralised there but because it was not. Strong men produce weak nations.

Concentration of power produces an augmentation of institutionalised as well as individual anxieties. An observer of the fish bowl that is Islamabad saw what the prime minister and his advisers must finally have seen: Whatever his failings — and there were some — the sympathies, spoken and unspoken, of the press, the legal profession, the bureaucracy, and the army officers' corps lay with the chief justice. Of course, Pakistan's soldier-in-chief became a visible and central player in the high game of politics. More importantly, the constituency he represented was restive, very restive indeed. At work was anxiety not ambition. The political class will do the country, and itself, a favour by comprehending the sources of this anxiety.

Today, there is no noticeable ambition for political power in the high command of the armed forces. To the contrary, their attention is focused on maintaining the army's autonomy, its ethos, professional integrity, and fighting capabilities in a world of lost friendships and shrinking supplies. Armies are rarely very articulate institutions, this one has inherited a colonial tradition of inarticulation. Hence, its frustrations have to be understood by civilian leaders. It is an army that has ruled this country — long and badly — which is not a pleasant reminder. It has fought three wars without winning, and was badly defeated in one. It had a pyrrhic victory in a proxy war — Afghanistan's — as its military objective there — the attainment of something its theoreticians called 'strategic depth' — remains a remote dream. Its agenda in Kashmir is unfulfilled. To make matters worse, it is economically squeezed. Inflation is emaciating it as an institution, and its personnel individually. Jawans rarely get to eat meat; and officers are served meat only about twice a week.

In this bleak environment, its leaders cherish the army's autonomy and their unity of command and purpose. They get anxious when these are threatened. Like the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the press and professional organisations, the army officers of today regard with apprehension the concentration of power in the executive branch of the government. Like others, they regard the devolution of power and a system of checks and balances, as essential features of stable and democratic governance. To make matters worse, Sharif was perceived by many as prone to concentrating power in his office.

Rumours reinforced this perception. Rumours play a large role in our society. Official misuse of the media, which renders radio and television extremely unreliable sources of information, enhances the role of rumour and gossip as vehicles for comprehending the workings and intent of those in power. Since the passage of the 13th and 14th amendments, rumours had filled the air — of how the prime minister proposes to tame the judiciary, how he plans to take control of the army, and how eventually he would circumscribe the press. None of it may have been true but the rumours were all there, causing anxieties and shaping attitudes. To many people in many places, the chief justice appeared to be standing up to an ominous trend. That explains the spontaneous and broad-based support he elicited.

But rumours were not the only stimulants to anxiety over a trend toward the concentration of power. Sharif's overwhelming parliamentary majority permits him a nearly free hand to legislate, make rules and change the rules of government. Then came the anxiety-inducing legislation. Some objected to the 14th amendment on purist grounds: any constriction put on legislators is a violation of their rights. Most people thought the purist position inappropriate in a country where so many elected representatives used their freedom of choice to go on the auction block. But then the government added to it a blanket prohibition on dissent itself. The Court had no choice but to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Similarly, the anti-terrorist law was legislated despite an informed consensus against it. The prime minister appears convinced that it has effectively ended sectarian violence in Pakistan. That is not true and his advisers ought to tell him so. Moreover, it is a bad policeman's law. Its provisions are unlikely to win judicial approval. The prime minister should realise this lest an unfavourable ruling cause another rift with the judiciary. True, the parliament is the supreme legislative body. But true also, the judiciary has the ultimate authority to rule on the constitutionality of laws.

If the right lessons are drawn from this event, great good will have come out of a bad situation. The past weeks revealed a polity stronger and more lively than most observers had imagined. The president avoided partisanship and played a quiet, moderating role. The Court stood its ground and has reinforced the principle of the separation of powers. In doing so, it had the active support of the institutions of civil society — the bar associations, the press, and the intelligentsia as a whole. Above all, the prime minister finally acted wisely. To him goes the ultimate credit of defusing a crisis that could have caused great damage to the country. Those who describe the conclusion of this crisis as Sharif's defeat are medieval jesters, or '*pahalwans*'. They do not know what democracy is about, nor what modernity entails.

Karachi conundrum

With the conviction of Mir Aimal Kansi in the US and the murder of four Americans in Pakistan, uncertainty surrounds the visit by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the region. **Mansoor Mirza** investigates

In the middle of Karachi's morning rush hour last Wednesday, four American oil executives and their Pakistani driver were shot dead by terrorists in what was widely believed to be a retaliation killing. The four Americans, all employees of the Union Texas Oil Company in Pakistan, were Tracey Ritchie, Ephraim Egbu, Joel Enlow and Larry Jennings. Their Pakistani driver was Anwar Mirza.

The attack happened as the American employees were being driven from their office to the Sheraton Hotel in Karachi. The gunmen opened fire on the black station-wagon in which the Americans were travelling forcing it off the road. Having come to a standstill, the gunmen fired through the windows of the car to make sure all its passengers were dead. In Washington, President Bill Clinton's spokesman described the attack as "an outrageous act of barbarism."

Union Texas Oil Company is the largest foreign oil investor in Pakistan. It is estimated that the company provides approximately half of Pakistan's domestic oil needs, extracting oil from fields in the Sindh province of Pakistan. Following the attack, there were fears that Union Texas would abandon its operations in Pakistan. However, Arnold Hoffman, president of Union Texas in Pakistan, said it had no immediate plans to withdraw its operations. "We have been working here for 20 years and have a long-term commitment to this country," he added.

The incident — in central Karachi — came just two days after Mir Aimal Kansi was convicted in Fairfax, Virginia, of the murder of two CIA agents in 1993. Kansi, standing trial after being extradited from Pakistan in 1995, was alleged to have walked through rush hour traffic to CIA headquarters at Langley, Virginia, carrying an automatic rifle, and then to have opened fire on a car killing two CIA employees. To the embarrassment of American intelligence, Kansi escaped undetected and fled the country to Pakistan. FBI agents were sent to Pakistan to find him and he was eventually caught in a raid while staying in a hotel in a remote part of Pakistan's Punjab province.

Kansi's trial ended last Monday with him being found guilty, however the jury was unable to decide whether to incarcerate him for life or instead to recommend that Kansi be sent to the electric chair. Two days after he was found guilty, the attack took place in Karachi. The judge in Kansi's trial subsequently ordered extra security for the jury, who were then taken away to decide Kansi's punishment. When they returned on Friday last week, they pronounced Kansi to be a persistent threat to society. His crime, they said, was particularly heinous and he should therefore be given the death penalty.

In the US, the White House has been cautious over suggestions of a possible link between the killings in Karachi and Kansi's guilty verdict. Michael McCurry, the White House spokesman said there was no evidence of a connection with the Kansi conviction. "I would stress at this point that we do not have any direct evidence that links the two but obviously, we will watch for any connections." On the other hand, Malik Iqbal, Karachi's police chief, felt more confident of a link when he told journalists that "it would be premature to say why the Americans were killed, but there is a strong possibility that it was linked to Mr Kansi's conviction."

It is not known for certain whether Kansi belongs to any of the militant Islamist groups in Pakistan. At his trial, the prosecution argued that Kansi had been incensed at the American-led allied bombings of Iraq during the Gulf War. This led him to target the CIA in his 1993 attack, the prosecution said. After the attack, Kansi, fled to Afghanistan via Pakistan where he was sheltered by Harkat ul-Ansar, the militant Islamist group which have fought a continuous war with Indian security forces in Kashmir. A top Pakistani security official believes that Harkat "are most likely to carry out an attack like the one in which the oil executives were killed."

Developments since the attack in Karachi lend less credence to Harkat being responsible, however. Harkat have carried out many such attacks and are not afraid to accept responsibility. In the past, Harkat officials have swiftly issued statements after similar attacks accepting responsibility. In the aftermath of the recent killings, however, Harkat denied any involvement. "Attempts to involve my party in this is a ploy to divert attention from the Jihad in occupied Kashmir," said Farooq Kashmiri, chief of Harkat ul-Ansar.

Furthermore, a day after the attack, a letter was sent to the daily *Jang*, Pakistan's most widely read Urdu language newspaper, where a previously unknown group accepted responsibility. The group, calling itself the Aimal Khufie or Secret Committee, accepted full responsibility and threatened the US government with similar attacks in the future unless Kansi was released. The letter, written in Urdu, also threatened that the group would "not spare any American Jews on Pakistani soil if Kansi was not released forthwith."

As a precautionary measure, the US State Department issued a warning to all Americans travelling abroad or already working abroad to be "wary of possible retaliation for the conviction of Kansi." The advice, specifically directed towards Americans in Pakistan, is to "stay in-doors."

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif telephoned President Clinton after the attack in Karachi, expressing his condemnation of the killings and vowing that his government "will spare no efforts to track down the culprits responsible for this heinous crime." Sharif appeared eager to underline his government's commitment to eradicating terrorist activities in Pakistan.

US State Department officials were quick to quash rumours that the attack in Karachi would jeopardise US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's visit to Pakistan and India, which started on Monday. Analysts have commented that the purpose of the attack may have been to sabotage Albright's visit. "She is expected to push the prime ministers of India and Pakistan towards settling the Kashmir issue," commented one analyst. "This would go against the demands and interests of Harkat ul-Ansar," he said. However, if Harkat's involvement in the attack is ruled out, sabotage of the Albright visit seems highly implausible.

Ethnic tension and conflict has been a part of life in Karachi for many years now. Mohajirs and Sindhis, along with a host of other ethnic communities, are constantly involved in shoot-outs on the streets of Karachi. It was thought that last week's attack may have been linked to one of these ethnic conflicts. Ethnic tension, however, has never spilled into violence towards the many foreigners living in Karachi.

Whatever the reason for the attack, Pakistan is increasingly finding itself being labeled a terrorist-harbouring state. This is undermining its ability to attract foreign investment, which, as Nawaz Sharif has commented, is vital to the future development of the country. With Madeleine Albright visiting the country this week and a visit by US President Bill Clinton planned for early next year, Pakistan will have to crack down hard on the militant elements in its midst if it is to keep its desired friendships.



Albright in Pakistan, Monday 17 November *(photo:Reuters)*

Chubais under fire

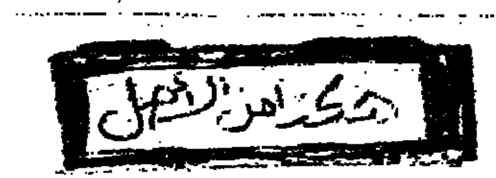
Yeltsin is under increasing pressure to sack his first deputy prime minister but appears loath to do so, writes **Abdel-Malek Khalil** from Moscow

Russian President Boris Yeltsin is under tremendous pressure from his Communist adversaries to sack First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais, the mastermind of Russia's economic deregulation programme. The Communists are well aware that Yeltsin cannot do without his top economic policy-maker. In a vain attempt to quash the Communist uproar, the Russian president summarily dismissed three leading officials for accepting $90,000 each to write a forthcoming book on the history of privatisation in Russia. The Communist parliamentarians who dominate the Russian Duma — the lower house of the Russian parliament — said that they will settle for nothing less than the sacking of Chubais.

The leader of Russia's Communist Party Gennady Zyuganov declared that his party would not consider the 1998 budget until the government reverses its fully bankrupt economic deregulation and privatisation plans. Communist rejection of the already agreed upon 1998 draft budget would deal a serious blow to the Yeltsin government, which is struggling to halt the decline of the Russian economy that has been shrinking for the past six years. If Yeltsin insists on hanging on to Chubais, he risks the wrath of the Communists, who want to push through parliament legislation that will increase government spending on social programmes in next year's budget.

The Communists point accusing fingers at Chubais for inflicting chaos on the Russian economy and dismantling the social support system. They say he has been responsible for selling off valuable state properties at fire-sale prices to wealthy bankers with close Kremlin contacts.

But there are others who believe that the blue-eyed boy of the West is irreplaceable. Chubais supporters think that if Chubais is sacked, billions of dollars will flow out of the country. Chubais, who also holds the post of finance minister, has described next year's budget as the cornerstone of the Russian government's economic policy. Chubais' recipe for the Russian economy is to slash public and social spending in order to keep the government deficit and inflation under control.





Tongue tied

Can La Francophonie punch above its weight? asks **Gamal Nkrumah**



Former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, leading the Egyptian delegation to the Francophonie summit in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi, was elected the new secretary-general of the association, less than a year after he stepped down as head of the UN. According to French President Jacques Chirac, La Francophonie, hitherto a purely cultural group, will be taking on a new political role in international affairs.

"The French-speaking world's first secretary-general will be the voice and face of our family. His authority will allow the Francophone family to play its full role on the international scene, Chirac explained in Hanoi.

At the UN, Boutros-Ghali was unceremoniously turned out on his ear. His new appointment is widely seen as vindicating him. But Boutros-Ghali has a big heart. "No ill feelings. Politics is about ups and downs," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Some at the UN felt he acted like a general without an army. "They wanted a secretary. They did not want a general. Now, as secretary-general of La Francophonie, I am permitted to be both secretary and general. I will lead the fight against poverty and dictatorship. I will fight for the respect of human rights, democracy and freedom. I have a large army of dedicated humanitarian workers, human rights activists and professional experts to help me implement development projects."

The imminent arrival of the millennium has brought several political, economic and cultural issues to the fore — the most important as far as Boutros-Ghali is concerned is the global North-South divide. "There is no danger any more of nuclear war. There is no incentive to pay attention to the needs of developing countries. After 30 years of development assistance, most developing countries are as poor as before. The issue of human rights is firmly on the back-burner. These are vital issues that concern me. I believe that now I am in a position to play a more effective role internationally as La Francophonie's secretary-general."

"When I was UN secretary-general, I spent much time defending regional groupings and organisations. Egypt is a member of La Francophonie, the Arab League, the Organisation of African Unity and the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Canada is a member of both the Commonwealth and La Francophonie. It is good that an individual country can be a member of two or three regional and international groupings. Now I am actually leading one such grouping. La Francophonie includes some of the world's richest nations and some of the world's poorest. We will be attempting to forge closer economic ties between rich and poor as well as strengthening linguistic, cultural and political ties," Boutros-Ghali told the *Weekly*.

Is French a language under siege? "To some degree. The global information industry and technology is dominated by the English language. The Internet was started by English-speaking nations, and in particular the United States which is the world's largest producer and consumer of information and information technologies. We are for cultural diversity on the Internet. The theme of the summit was freedom, democracy and development. There are 250 million French speakers worldwide, but no more than 100 million of these French-speakers speak only French — the vast majority of the world's French-speakers are bilingual or multilingual. The cultural domination of a single country, like the US, is an affront to humanity, the consequences of which are already upon us."

In Hanoi, there were no specific recommendations for the new secretary-general of La Francophonie on the new budget to develop closer political, economic and cultural ties between La Francophonie's member states.

Boutros-Ghali is keen to change the image of La Francophonie, from an essentially cultural grouping to one which tackles the member states' economic and political problems head on. The vast majority of member states are developing countries in Africa. Yet never has France seemed to have its gaze so firmly fixed on the other side of the world. This is the first time that La Francophonie has met in Asia. A far cry from the last summit, which took place in the West African nation of Benin in 1995.

The organisation came into being 11 years ago, the brainchild of the late French President François Mitterrand. La Francophonie missed a trick by not appointing a secretary-general at its inception. Today, the French-speaking world is determined to organise itself into a political force on the world stage modelled on the Commonwealth of former British colonies. However, there are many important differences between the two organisations. While the reigning British monarch is the symbolic head of the Commonwealth, the French president has no analagous role. France has been accused of wanting secretly to reassemble the empire it lost in the aftermath of World War II. Another problem is that many member-states of La Francophonie do not actually have French as their official language. In Vietnam, the host nation and a former French colony, French is spoken by less than 70,000 of Vietnam's 78 million people. Other examples abound — only some 500,000 Egyptians speak French, whether as their first, second or third language.

Nevertheless, the turn out for the Hanoi summit showed that many world leaders feel the gathering of French-speaking nations is important enough to merit their attention. Over 2,000 delegates were in attendance. Among the world leaders present were Canada's Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri, Monaco's Prince Albert, Swiss President Arnold Koller and a host of African heads of state including Congo's newly-installed strongman Denis Sassou-Nguesso and Gabon's President Omar Bongo. Conspicuously absent were the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Laurent Désirè Kabila and Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk. The latter, it is rumoured, has become increasingly despondent faced with his country's continuing political crisis. All in all, 49 member countries or provinces of French-speaking territories were represented.

The Francophonie summit comes at a time when France is urging its fellow European Union member states to pay special attention to the needs of the poorest developing countries. At France's behest, EU foreign ministers agreed on a new approach to aid for 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries — about a third of which are former French colonies. The small print is to be worked out in detail by the European Commission. EU aid programmes and funding of development projects are not making much of a difference, and France warned that future trade and aid deals must not undermine Europe's responsibility to its former colonies. "We have certain obligations toward these countries. We must not give up on them." Pierre Boissieu, France's envoy to the EU told the delegates in Brussels last week.

"The system of trade preferences has not been sufficient to generate a sustained development dynamic," said Joao de Deus Pinheiro, the EU Commissioner for ACP states on the eve of the Hanoi summit meeting. The EU has spent $47 billion on aid to the ACP states over the past quarter of a century. Yet during that period, the ACP's share of all EU imports fell from 7 per cent to 2.6 per cent and currently 80 per cent of all ACP exports to the EU come from just six countries — the most prosperous ones. The current five-year accord between the ACP and the EU ends in 2000. It dispenses some $17 billion in benefits.

The EU Commission will draft a formal negotiating mandate for a new ACP-EU treaty. The idea is to move away from old-style grants and trade benefits to building up ACP economies and encouraging them to embrace market economies and democratic reforms. In any case, the old form of arrangement between the EU and the ACP is no longer compatible with the regulations governing the World Trade Organisation.

Economic cooperation topped the agenda in Hanoi. The Vietnamese themselves set the tone. "The time has come to speak more about economic development," Nguyen Manh told reporters in Hanoi. Chirac agreed: "The moment has come to set in action the initiative to create a Francophone economic area." For the Africans and the Vietnamese, the onus was on aid and development. The Europeans' catchphrase was the drive to build an "economic grouping".

Yet to some this emphasis smacked somewhat of the old colonial powers' carving up of the world into neat spheres of interest. Mere coincidence? Joint venture projects were discussed, for which France, Canada, Switzerland, Belgium and Luxembourg are expected to foot the bill. But assistance still comes at a price. Take the case of the Congo. Competition for greater drilling rights between French and American oil concerns is fierce in the Congo. Over 60 per cent of government revenue comes from oil sales — most of which go to France. There are 1,500 French citizens in the Congo, most of them in the oil hub of Pointe Noire. French forces stationed in neighbouring Gabon stand ready to intervene. The French oil giant Elf-Aquitaine is pulling all the strings it can. Elf has a big stake in the Congo, as it is currently pumping the lion's share of the country's oil reserves.

Oil is the key to political power in the Congo. Nguesso's troops need funding, and Elf has obliged. Nguesso has transformed the country from an oil-rich left-wing haven into a state with an open economy that is receptive to overtures from the West — and especially from France. Nguesso has mended his fences with the pro-French right-wing governments of Mobutu's Zaire and Gabon, and the sight of Chirac shaking hands with the Congo president in Hanoi was not lost on the summit's other ticpants. It is one thing to say that La Francophonie stands for democracy and development, and quite another to see democratically-elected leaders rubbing shoulders with strongmen who have usurped power through the barrel of the gun. Despite its good intentions and its interest in *la différence*, to judge by its deeds to date the French-speaking association seems destined to go the way of so much of the world, seeking refuge from the daily round of compromise in the illusions of progress. Egypt's Boutros-Ghali will have his task cut out, if he is to prove that France is a more workable partner for the South than was an American-dominated UN.

Even 'New' Labour can't swallow Netanyahu

As Binyamin Netanyahu visited London to seek British support for his government's policies, **Gavin Bowd** talked exclusively to two prominent Labour activists

There has been much talk of a rapprochement between the British Labour Party and the Jewish community and Israel. At the May election, there was a significant shift in the Jewish vote from Conservative to Labour. Substantial donations were made to Tony Blair's party by Jewish businessmen. At the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, in September, Chancellor Gordon Brown addressed a meeting of Labour Friends of Israel. His remarks drew a standing ovation from an audience of 400, who included MPs and diplomats. Such developments have led Sion Simon, in *The Spectator*, to write of the decisive influence of the Jewish lobby on the Labour leadership. But to what extent does 'New Labour' really mean 'New Zionism'? According to this argument there has been an evolution in the political affiliations of Britain's Jewish community.

Jewish immigrants to Britain were originally of socialist, communist and anarchist sympathies. However, as this community grew prosperous, it moved out to the leafy suburbs of cities such as London, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow, and, with that, shifted allegiance to the Conservative Party. In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher was a heroine, who pursued an economically liberal and morally authoritarian policy at home, and, despite, the pro-Arab prejudices of the Foreign Office, a pro-Israel policy abroad. Her cabinet contained Jewish Tories such as Nigel Lawson, Lord Young and Keith Joseph.

The Labour Party, however, had fallen into the hands of the Left. They increasingly saw Israel as a colonial power unjustly oppressing the Palestinians. Within the party, the Zionist lobby was weak: in 1988, Labour Friends of Israel had only 400 members and one member of staff and worked out of a dilapidated office. Furthermore, LFI were compromised by the behaviour of the Likud governments in Israel.

This situation changed at the beginning of the 1990s. Firstly, Margaret Thatcher was overthrown. Then first John Smith, followed by Tony Blair, moved the party back towards the centre ground, marginalising the hard left. This change in political orientation was accompanied by a refusal to contimue to portray the Israelis as 'oppressors' of the Palestinian people. Britain's Jewish community turned against a Conservative regime riddled by greed and sleaze. The Conservatives had misunderstood the Jews' moral, community-bound attitudes; a party for which charity was as trivial an act as playing golf on a Sunday afternoon was never likely to keep their votes for long. The Jewish community was therefore receptive to the "communitarian" stance of New Labour. Tony Blair himself had close ties to the Jewish community: as a barrister in chambers, his mentor was a future Jewish Chairman of the Board of Deputies. Incidentally, while a lawyer in London, Blair was also an afficionado of the legendary delicatessen, Bloom's (whose former premises now house a branch of Burger King). Blair is also very close to Lord Levi, head of the charity Jewish Care. The 'pro-Zionist' turning point coincided happily with positive developments in Israel. From 1993 onwards, Rabin and Peres made attempts at reconciliation with the Palestinian people. This lessened the potential for ideological conflict within the British Labour Party. Labour Friends of Israel were able to hold joint meetings with another party caucus, the Middle East Council, where common ground was found on mutual recognition of Israel and Palestine. The change in the fortunes of the Zionist Lobby seemed to be confirmed at the 1996 Labour Conference, where a thousand people packed a fringe meeting to hear Tony Blair and Robin Cook address these issues. Since the landslide of 1 May, LFI have interpreted as a victory proposed legislation to make Holocaust denial a criminal offense. They have also welcomed efforts by foreign secretary, Robin Cook, to have Jewish gold recovered from the vaults of Swiss banks.

Instrumental in this alleged rapprochement between Labour and the Jewish community has been Miles Webber, former director of Labour Friends of Israel. Webber told *Al-Ahram Weekly:* "Robin Cook has taken the prejudice out of Labour policy towards Israel: it is now friendly, and recognises Israel's right to exist. It is also pragmatic rather than high-handed. When Malcolm Rifkind visited Israel, he behaved as if Britian still had a mandate."

Cook has a more realistic view of Britain's place in the world today. "Labour is active in 'grass-roots' attempts at reconciliation, organising exchanges and promoting non-governmental projects that cross the divides between Israel, Palestine and Jordan". For Webber, the old conflict between socialism and Zionism is defunct. "I am comfortable as a socialist Zionist because I believe in a people's right to self-determination. That debate has happily been won in the Labour Party." Webber singles out as his arch-opponent the Labour MP George Galloway. Galloway, a well-known supporter of the PLO, distinguished himself by meeting Colonel Muaamar Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein. His home town, Dundee, achieved notoriety in the 1980s by flying the PLO flag on the roof of its City Hall. For Webber, Galloway embodies the hard-Left, internationalist, anti-Zionist attitudes that have no place in New Labour.

Galloway, however, is vice-chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party Affairs Committee. He told the *Weekly*: "I am quite comfortable with Labour policy on Israel, which has not changed since 1982. I should know this because I drafted it. Labour recognises the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. It is also committed to a Palestinian state that includes the West Bank and Gaza, and has East Jerusalem as its capital. Since the election, this policy has not changed. I have known Robin Cook for twenty years, and I can assure you that he remains a friend of the Palestinian people."

Galloway contemptuously dismisses the 'socialist Zionism' of Miles Webber: "The kibbutz is not the building block for a socialist state. It is a den of thieves where they share out equally their spoils. It is stolen property, won through superior fire power and economic development. The progressive movements of the world have been filled with Jews. But Zionism has poisoned the well of the Jewish communities. With the result that many progressive Jews are leaving Israel." In the last fifty years, only 70,000 American Jews have chosen to emigrate to Israel — only a third of the number of Israeli Jews who have emigrated to the US. Similarly, with the end of apartheid, most South African Jews chose to seek new homes in Europe, Canada or even Australia. A recent poll, published last month in *Maariv*, showed that 19 per cent of Israeli Jews would emigrate if they were able to find a home elsewhere.

As for the 'victories' of Labour's Jewish Lobby, Galloway is equally vituperative: "It is utterly deplorable for them to associate themselves with legislation on war criminals and Holocaust denial. Any socialist is against racist and anti-semitic attitudes. I believe that war criminals should be hounded until their last breath. This lobby is confusing two separate issues: anti-fascism and attitudes to Israel. "They should realise that there are lots of fascists in Israel as well. Collective punishments, torture, people opening fire on mosques, the dropping of fragmentation and phosphorus bombs on Lebanon: these are fascist acts. I maintain that Zionism has seduced the Jewish people down a blind alley, Zionism has been a disaster for the Jewish and Palestinian people alike."

The facts certainly seem to bear out George Galloway's contention that Labour's policy has not significantly changed, and that a two-state solution remains uppermost in its leaders' minds. At the LFI conference meeting this year. Gordon Brown certainly spoken in favour of more trade with Israel. However, he also spoke of the need for aid to bolster the economic future of the Palestinians. At the same meeting, the Labour Middle East Spokesman, Derek Fatchett, declared: "We need to look to the horizon in the way that Shimon Peres did. If that doesn't happen, then the prospects are dire indeed." In recent weeks, at parliamentary question time, Robin Cook has made trenchant critiques of Israeli policy on Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

This week, Netanyahu visited London with the hope of getting Britain to use its forthcoming presidency of the European Union — Israel's biggest trading partner — to put pressure on Yasser Arafat. The prospects are, however, that it will be the Israeli regime that will find itself being pushed to modify policy. According to a Whitehall source: "We believe the main reason the peace process is going much less strongly is the change of approach by Israel. Tony Blair is pressing for a commitment that Israel will avoid actions, especially in Jerusalem, that could pre-empt talks on the final status of the territories."

The new Netanyahu government is certainly having a divisive effect on British Jewry. Miles Webber himself has recently resigned as director of Labour Friends of Israel, because he did not want to be felt to be representing Likud policies. Netanyahu's visit has highlighted deep splits in the Jewish community. All Britain's major Jewish youth groups, with the exception of the Likud-affiliated Betar, decided to greet Netanyahu with an unprecendent joint protest at a Knesset bill that would deny recognition to non-Orthodox conversions. In the *Jewish Chronicle* of that week, there were two letters, one for and one against Netanyahu, each signed by hundreds of supporters. In the first, Conrad Morris, a leading supporter of Jewish settlers, pledged his support for 'peace with security'.

The letter from British Friends of Peace Now attracted the support of, among others, the actress Janet Suzman, the violinist Yehudi Menuhin, and the playwrights Steve Berkoff and Harold Pinter. As if to further emphasise communal splits, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research published a report that showed weakening attachment to Israel among young British Jews. The report stated: "It can be assumed that the Rabin assassination and the election of the Netanyahu government mean that today, far from being a source of cohesion and consensus, in some respects, Israel is becoming a source of communal tension." If so, then the events of the last few years may well prove to be a false dawn for New Labour's Zionists.

Cracks in cement market

A recent skyrocketing in the prices of cement has market players blaming each other. **Mona El Fiqi** reports

Cement traders are at loggerheads with producers and marketing agents over a recent rise in prices which they say hurts sales and overburdens consumers.

Over the past few months prices of cement have fluctuated between LE210 and LE260 per ton, up from a stable LE200 previously. While traders blame the rise on agents, producers and agents in turn attribute the increase to market forces.

"The prices of cement increase or decrease according to supply and demand," said Hatem Khalil, deputy chairman of the Suez Cement Company.

Cement companies produce the same amount every month, but consumption increases during the summer, pushing prices up.

Khalil said that cement companies in Egypt produce nearly 1.5 million tons monthly. It is not easy to increase production capacity unless new production units are added or old ones are renovated.

"In addition, cement cannot be stored for more than a month, so the product has to be used quickly," Khalil added.

Mohamed Magdi, a cement agent, agrees with Khalil, attributing the increase in demand in the summer to Egyptians living in the Gulf who come *home for the holidays and use their savings* to build or do up their houses. "Consumption exceeds production during the summer months, causing prices to rise," he said.

But cement traders say agents are to blame for all the problems in the cement market. Khaled Azmi, a retail trader, says the agents manipulate the market by agreeing together to hike prices in the summer to compensate for the reduced demand during the winter season.

Azmi claims that some agents undermine the retail market by selling small amounts of cement to individual consumers at wholesale prices, an accusation which agents such as Magdi vehemently deny.

A study of the cement industry in Egypt, conducted by EFG-Hermes, a financial group heavily involved in the privatisation of public sector cement companies, states that production rose steadily over the past three years in response to increased demand, among other factors.

Although Egypt achieved self-sufficiency in the early '90s, the study says that imports have reappeared over the past two years to bridge the growing gap between local supply and demand. Production increased to 19.2 tons this year, but consumption was 21 million tons, so nearly 2.3 million tons of cement was imported.

According to *EFG-Hermes'* study, consumer prices for imported cement vary between a minimum of LE200 per ton during winter and LE220-230 per ton in summer.

However, while Azmi argues that consumers prefer local cement but resort to imported cement because of lower prices, Magdi says that in summer importers always reduce the prices and increase the quantity of the imported cement because they know that local cement will not meet market needs.

The system whereby agents are charged with distributing all the cement produced by cement companies is a relatively new one.

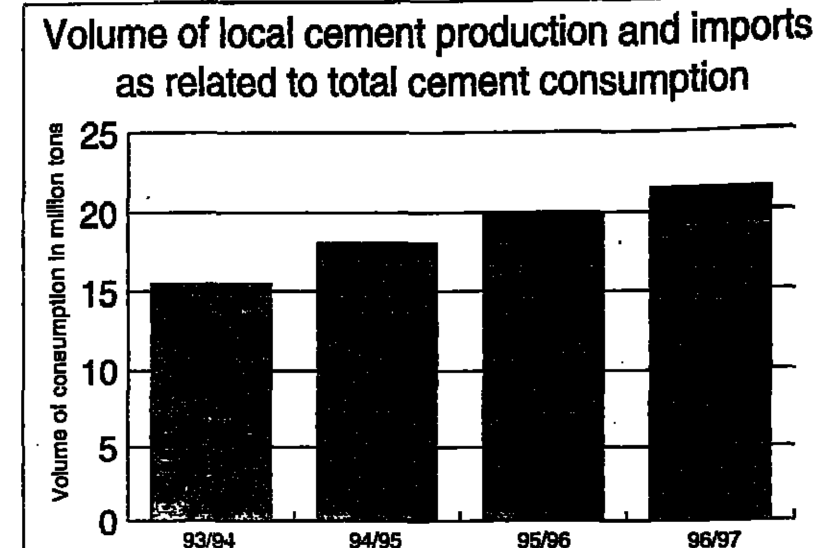
Before 1994 the sale of cement was centralised and conducted through the cement distribution office of each cement company directly to traders. In 1994 a new distribution system was adopted whereby cement companies selected agents for the sale of cement.

There are currently 2,000 agents allocated between 500 and 3,000 tons of cement a month by the cement companies.

Hatem Khalil of Suez Cement defends the new system, arguing it is more suitable for cement companies because agents are able to take hundreds or thousands of tons monthly while traders will not be able to absorb such quantities especially in the winter season.

"Before 1994 most cement production was absorbed by public sector companies, but after the privatisation policy was enacted, the activities of public sector companies have been reduced, the private sector is now taking almost the whole production," said Khalil.

The cement industry began in Egypt in 1927 with the establishment of Torah Portland Cement Company. There are currently eight cement companies producing cement in Egypt. Of these, seven companies are governed by the Public Enterprise Law 203 of 1991. A ninth *company*, the *Egyptian Cement* Company is a private sector company currently being established.



Private harbour in Suez

A new harbour, to be established by the private sector in north Suez, is expected to bring more investors to the area. But some are sceptical about the benefits. **Reem Leila** reports

The General Association for Red Sea Harbours (GARSH) has announced a plan for a new commercial harbour to be built by a group of private investors at the north Suez free zone in Al-Adabiya City.

The LE150 million harbour, to be established un*der the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) system* will have a 1,400-metre-long and 300-metre-deep platform.

Designed for use only by "mother ships", which can carry about 5,000 containers, the harbour will be one of the leading facilities along the Red Sea coast, said Hassan Rashed, GARSH's chairman.

The government was forced to turn to foreign investor help in this project because of the cost, he said. But under the BOT system, investor participation will be for a limited time.

Investors will be given a franchise period of 25 years, during which the government will have the right to supervise the harbour's operation's in order to guard against smuggling and ensure that it is run according to Egyptian law.

Five per cent of the total profits during this franchise period will be given to GARSH, along with *the rental cost. But after the period has elapsed, the* administration of the harbour, along with the equipment will be handed over to the government, which will then pass it on to a private sector Egyptian company.

Under the new Egyptian management, GARSH will take 80 per cent of the profits, while the company will receive the remaining 20 per cent.

While some Egyptian businessmen, like Marrawan El-Sammak, owner of a shipping company and one of the project's investors, believe that this project will mean that the harbour is ultimately run more efficiently, others argue that it leaves the way open for foreign interference.

"Private investors are more experienced in running such harbours... and are more familiar with the problems of harbours and shipping," said El-Sammak.

But Ahmed Halawa, an executive manager of a *textile manufacturing company that is likely to use* the harbour in the future, said that foreign involvement in the project is tantamount to an "economic invasion".

"Foreigners stand to benefit the most from such projects," said Halawa. "They could ask to renew the franchise period to make more profits, and this means we will not be able to benefit from the project."

But for their part, harbour officials and some government officials are unwilling to delve into the politics of the issue, preferring instead to focus on how the country, as a whole, can benefit from such projects in the future.

This type of harbour is a new trend in maritime navigation, and will enable large container carriers to unload in less time, pay less docking fees and, as a result, draw in more ships and money into the country, said Ahmed Sayed, head of the Suez Cus*toms Department.*

The harbour will increase commercial movement in the area, create jobs in the region surrounding Al-Adabiya City and bring in millions of dollars which, by the end of the franchise period, will go into the government's coffers, said Nabil Lotfy, head of the Central Administration for Harbour Affairs.

GARSH has stipulated that all those who will work in this project must be Egyptians, said Lotfy. And the few foreign experts who will participate will do so in the capacity of senior project supervisers.

Apache credit

A FIVE-year, $250 million revolving credit facility to fund Apache Corporation's Egyptian oil and gas sub*sidiaries* was signed with a group of international banks led by the Chase Manhattan Bank on 17 November.

The deal is considered Egypt's largest-ever private sector financing arrangement not supported by any international financing institution.

The credit facility will be used to refinance existing *debts* owed by Apache's Egyptian operations and to fund the company's oil and gas exploration and development operations, as well as other general corporate development expenditures in Egypt.

Apache, the largest lease-holder in Egypt, with 28 million acres, is one of the world's leading independent oil and gas companies. The company and its partners currently operate 13 rigs in Egypt and will participate in 50 wells this year. The company's current gross production in Egypt is 72,000 barrels of liquid hydrocarbons per day.

Móodys ups rating

THE EGYPTIAN economy received a new international pat on the back when Moodys, an international rating agency, raised its evaluation of both *the Egyptian* long-term foreign reserves and foreign currency deposits.

In June the agency frustrated the Egyptian banking sector with its low rating for the financial strength of the four public banks. This rating was described as "unfair" by most of Egyptian bankers and economists.

The agency attributed its new move to the improvement in credit policies and the Egyptian government's commitment to implementing structural economic reforms.

It also praised the pace of the privatisation programme, pointing out the growing role of the private sector, especially in infrastructure projects. A report issued by the agency drew attention to this by stating that the first Egyptian power station by the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) system will soon be established.

Moodys' report comes a few days after the International Finance Cooperation (IFC) included Egypt in its composite index and six months after Standard and Poors gave the Egyptian economy a high rating.

However, the report stressed that the Egyptian government still has some problems to tackle such as bureaucracy, low local savings and the underdeveloped legal framework. Moreover, it criticised the low levels of direct investments.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

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Al-Ahram: A *Diwan* of contemporary life

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On a visit to Egypt in 1910, ex-US President Theodore Roosevelt created an uproar. In a lecture he delivered at Fouad I University, Roosevelt dismissed the Egyptians' desire for a constitution as premature and accused Muslim Egyptians of fanaticism. **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk** puts the story together from reports in *Al-Ahram*

Illustration: Makram Henein

The spring of 1910 saw the first visit of an American president to Egypt, even if only an ex-president. Theodore Roosevelt had just completed his second term of office, having left the White House the previous year amidst great laurels for his stance against monopolies. His presidency was crowned by the Nobel Prize which he won in 1906 and which, according to one Egyptian newspaper, ranked him among the greatest American presidents, Washington and Lincoln.

As has generally been the case with US presidents, Roosevelt's public career did not end with his last term in office. Over the previous year, Roosevelt had been furnishing a major American magazine with stories about his adventures during a hunting trip in equatorial Africa. It was on his way home from these exploits that he passed through Egypt.

His visit was heralded with great enthusiasm in the Egyptian press. Proclaiming its welcome to the US president, *Al-Mu'ayyid* blazoned the headline: "To His Excellency, Colonel Roosevelt — to one of the celebrated leaders of the 20th century — to the noblest representative of the great American people."

Al-Ahram voiced similar sentiments in its article "Our great guest". It also covered assiduously the details of the many official receptions that were held in Roosevelt's honour. On 26 March 1910, it reported on the splendid "luncheon hosted by His Royal Highness the Khedive in Abdin Palace in honour of Colonel Roosevelt and his family." The US consul in Cairo also hosted an elegant dinner, "attended by His Excellency Prince Ahmed Fouad Pasha, the uncle of His Royal Highness the Khedive, and Sir Eldon Gorst."

It was not Roosevelt's courage and fame alone that prompted this warm reception. His reputation as an outspoken advocate of democracy had preceded him to Egypt, a country in the throes of high nationalist fervour and the struggle against British occupation. Adding to his aura was the fact that the US had not yet embarked on any imperial ventures in Africa or the Arab world, in sharp contrast to Great Britain.

Naturally, in light of his reputation, Roosevelt was showered by invitations to speak. The only invitation he accepted, however, was that of the Egyptian university. Roosevelt, on his trip from equatorial Africa through Sudan to Egypt had given a number of speeches, the content of which was not pleasing to Egyptian ears. The newspaper, therefore, took the occasion to remind the former US president that he had "entered the land which was the cradle of the first civilisations."

At 11am on Monday, 28 March, Roosevelt was greeted at the university by Prince Fouad Pasha, the director of the university. As *Al-Ahram* reports, "the lecture hall was packed with prominent male and female personalities and intellectuals. Prince Fouad introduced the speaker to the audience.

Al-Ahram devoted two successive editions to the speech, which, true to *Al-Ahram*'s foreboding, many Egyptians found offensive. At a time highly charged with nationalist fervour and demands for a constitution Roosevelt told his audience, "You cannot make a person truly educated merely by giving him certain lessons. Similarly you cannot make a nation suitable to rule itself simply by giving it a constitution on a piece of paper. Bringing up an individual and educating him to be suitable for a job takes many long years. In like manner, preparing a nation to be successful in the duties of self-government cannot be undertaken in 10 years or even 20, but rather it requires successive generations. Some ignorant charlatans claim that by merely having a constitution on a piece of paper, especially if its preamble is filled with many big resonant words, will render a nation capable of self-government. This is not the case at all. Not a person in the world can give a nation self-government, as no person can give another self-reliance."

The audience could not have been more stunned. The former US president was telling them the same message that they had been hearing over and over again from the occupation authorities. Also, nationalist leaders had been seeking to rebuff accusations, particularly in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Butros Ghali, a Copt, that theirs was a fanatical movement. Roosevelt's insinuation against the leaders of the nationalist movement, therefore, came as a further slap in the face.

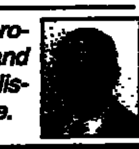
Another portion of his speech may well have served to inflame religious dissension, rather than quell it. He said that the way to lift the nation was "to spread the spirit which censures all evil and all forms of envy and hatred, particularly that based on differences in religion and national origin. Throughout the world, all people eager for reform and keen on earning respect for their nation abroad have been overcome by indescribable grief and pain because of the recent murder of Butros Ghali. The killer had wrought upon Egypt far greater damage than the death of an individual. The person who nurtures the killer... is the person who sits at the pinnacle of shame and depravity. And all who attempt to justify his actions, turn a blind eye to his conduct or attempt to justify them are equally at fault."

The Nationalist Party was not about to remain silent over these intimations against it. Its mouthpiece, *Al-Shaab*, published a supplement immediately after the speech, in order to voice the party's protest against the Egyptian university and against Roosevelt. Roosevelt's speech occasioned one of the rare departures from *Al-Ahram*'s customary restraint. In its editorial of 31 March it wrote, "It would never have occurred to us that Roosevelt might pass through this country like a storm, causing such devastation to our nerves. It would never have occurred to us that his brief visit would arouse such acrimony and violent passions." One cause for Roosevelt's outburst, according to *Al-Ahram*, was that he was misinformed. The former American president, it wrote, depended heavily for his knowledge on Egypt upon the reports of Lord Cromer and the British press in Egypt. Thus, "like every Westerner, he has conceived the most horrendous image of every Easterner." He took for granted the opinions of the British, "the very ones who are withholding a constitution from us," and by so blatantly ignoring Egyptian views on the subject, "he has touched a raw nerve, and indeed has put his hand on the open wound of a nation crying out in pain and whose patience has worn thin."

It is interesting to note that, in its attack against Roosevelt, the newspaper focused exclusively on his references to the constitutional issue. It appeared loath to discuss his intimations that the Egyptian nationalists were fanatics.

On the same day Roosevelt delivered his speech, the Nationalist Party called a rally. *Al-Ahram* reports: "Four hundred students had assembled before the podium and in the seats behind the barrier there was a large throng." Ali Fahmi Kamel, the brother of the late nationalist leader Mustafa Kamel, gave an impassioned speech, after which the audience decided to go to the hotel where Roosevelt was staying in order to voice their protest within his hearing. "They left the hall and marched behind the Egyptian flag until they amassed in front of Shepherds Hotel where they stood shouting, 'Down with the hypocrites! Long live the Constitution! Long live Egypt! Down with the occupational! Down with Roosevelt!'

That evening, Ahmed Lutfi El-Sayid, secretary-general of the Umma Party, addressed a large assembly of that party. Roosevelt's speech, he said, "exceeded the bounds of a university lecture to constitute a stance against the current constitutional movement in Egypt." If, as the American president said, acquiring a constitution is to be a gradual process, "at what point does this gradual process begin, at what point does it end and at what stage are we Egyptians at present on the way to self-rule?" Finally, he took occasion to draw the obvious comparison between the US and Egypt, saying, "Let me advise Mr Roosevelt that if he must deliver a lesson to a nation then let that be a nation such as the US which has only recently emerged from barbarism. As for Egypt, it is an ancient civilisation that ruled itself in accordance with the principle of *shura* (consultation) before America was discovered and had already taken for itself a constitution before it was occupied."



The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

Money & Business

Clear vision from Clear-Cut

A GREAT number of persons over the age of 40 ignore the fact that they may need to use corrective eyeglasses for nearsightedness, which hampers them from effectively carrying out such tasks as office and technical work, and even household tasks like sewing. After the age of 40, the eye naturally tends to lose its ability to see, making reading glasses a necessity.

Now, thanks to reading glasses from Clear-Cut, customers can literally have a new outlook on life. Glasses are available from +1.0 to +4, and can be worn over contact lenses. Clear-Cut glasses are distributed in Egypt through Multi-Form Co. and are available at all leading pharmacies.

New headquarters for Delta Insurance

A CONTRACT to complete the second stage of the new headquarters of Delta Insurance Company was signed recently amid great fanfare. Signing the contract was Mr Fathi Youssef, chairman of the board of Delta Insurance, and Eng. Mohamed Wali, chairman of the board of Wali Contracting Company.

Youssef stated that the first stage of the project, involving the laying down of the foundation work, will be completed by the end of the current month. The second stage, due to begin in December of this year, will include the construction of the buildings nine floors. Work for this second stage will be done at a cost of LE8 million over a period of 18 months.

ACITEX Exhibition from 18-21 February 1998

THE EXHIBITION and conference sector is distinguished by the Cairo International Conference Centre because of the top-of-the-line facilities it has for hosting a variety of important conference and exhibitions, such as the Sixth Artificial Intelligence Conference and the Sixth Al-Ahram Computer and Information Technology Exhibition (ACITEX). The conference's business will be conducted in the Press Hall, while the four smaller halls and the Press Centre will be dedicated for small-scale meetings and symposia from exhibiting companies. The cafeteria will serve as an informal meeting place where participants can exchange views and ideas in an informal atmosphere. This is in addition to the new halls of the exhibition, which are capable of facilitating such international conferences. ACITEX will be set up on a wide floorspace that permits a greater freedom of movement for visitors.



Cairo International Conference Centre

Dr Abada Sirhan, dean of the Faculty of Computer Science, explained that papers presented at the Artificial Intelligence Conference will deal with numerous topics, including: word and image processing, screen systems, machine translation, networks, natural languages, machine vision, robotics, telecommunications, intelligent learning systems, and artificial intelligence applications, all of which are aimed at providing solutions for problems faced by peoples of all nations.

As for the Sixth ACITEX Exhibition, held simultaneously alongside the Artificial Intelligence Exhibition, it is being organised on the basis of bringing about global contact between domestic and international companies operating in the field of computer and information technology. Both leading companies and new companies will be represented at the exhibition, with Egyptian companies making a significant showing owing to its abundance of expertise in the field. The importance of the exhibition lies in that it is the perfect opportunity for Egypt to acquaint itself with the latest advances in the world of computer technology.

It is worth mentioning that representatives from the German SYSTEMS computer exhibition will have a display booth at ACITEX, which falls within the framework of officials from both exhibitions exchanging expertise and ideas.

Faisal Islamic Bank increases its capital

HIS HIGHNESS Prince Mohamed Al-Faisal Al Saud, chairman of the board of Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt, said that a general assembly recently convened by the Bank has decided to increase its issued and subscribed capital by US$50 million, to reach a total of $150 million. Subscriptions in the increased capital will be limited only to the Bank's current shareholders, who can subscribe to an amount of the new capital shares up to 50 per cent of their original holdings.



Prince Mohamed Al-Faisal

The subscription period will last a month, beginning on 24 November and ending 23 December 1997.

The main goal behind this decision to increase the Bank's capital is to boost resources in building a capital base suited to the volume of the Bank's different and diversified activities, which have witnessed positive developments during the past five years. Figures are a testimony to this: the Bank's activities have increased by 22.6 per cent from June 1993-May 1997. Customer deposits during the same period saw a similar increase by 19.3 per cent. The Bank's investment balance grew by 28.2 per cent, while surplus activities rose by 38.8 per cent.

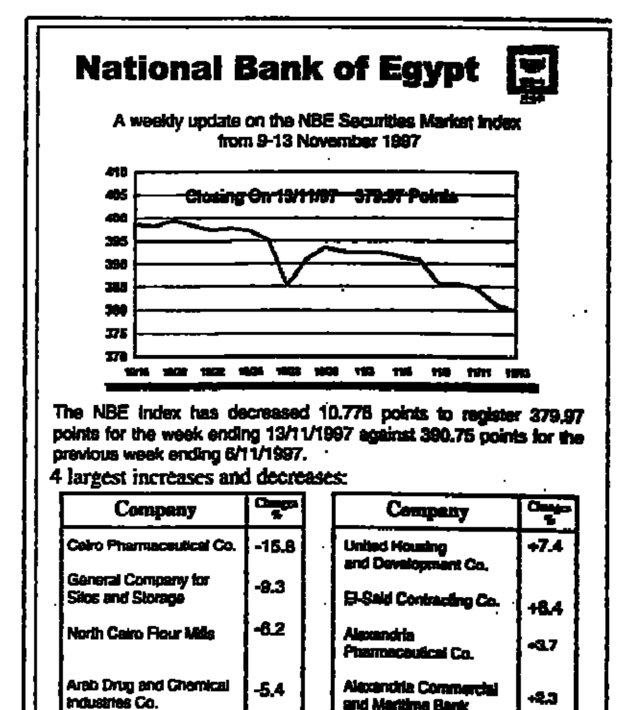
His highness indicated that the number of companies established by the bank or holds shares in their capital totals 35, all of which are involved in diversified areas of economic activity. Total capital in these companies has reached the equivalent of LE1420 million, with the Bank's share in these capitals equaling LE232 million.

Regarding the social activities of the Bank, his highness said that reserve resources of the Bank's *Zakat* Fund have climbed steadily over the past five years, and now stand at the equivalent of LE53.4 million, all of which was gathered in accordance with Islamic *Shari'a*. Monies collected through this fund are employed in charitable projects, such as the construction of student dormitories, and other charitable works.

Figures for the first half of the current fiscal year ending on 31 October 1997 have been compiled, said Abu Hamid Abu Moussa, governor of the bank. The surplus of the Bank's activities during this 6-month period reached LE184 million, in contrast to LE165.6 million during the same period of the previous year, an increase of 11 per cent. Dividends distributed to investment account holders reached the equivalent of LE158.9 million, as opposed to LE145.1 million for the same period last year, an increase of 9.5 per cent. At the same time, overall financial position of the bank reached an equivalent of LE6490 million, in comparison to 6163.9 million during the same period last year, an increase of 5.3 per cent. The volume of customer deposits increased to an equivalent of LE5343.2 million, a registered growth of 233.1 million, or 4.6 per cent, over the previous year.

Likewise, the balance of investment operations has increased to the equivalent of LE5839.4 million, in comparison to the equivalent of LE5331.1 million, an increase of LE308.3 million or 5.6 per cent.

The Bank's companies operate in a variety of important and lively sectors, with particular importance placed on the production sector, comprising of agriculture, industry, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and housing.



National Bank of Egypt

A weekly update on the NBE Securities Market Index from 9-13 November 1997

The NBE Index has decreased 10.778 points to register 379.97 points for the week ending 13/11/1997 against 390.75 points for the previous week ending 6/11/1997.

4 largest increases and decreases:

Company	Change %
Cairo Pharmaceutical Co.	-15.8
General Company for Silos and Storage	-9.3
North Cairo Flour Mills	-6.2
Arab Drug and Chemical Industries Co.	-5.4

Company	Change %
United Housing and Development Co.	+7.4
El-Said Contracting Co.	+6.4
Alexandria Pharmaceutical Co.	+3.7
Alexandria Commercial and Maritime Bank	+3.3



No more tragedies

President Mubarak's rapid response to the terrible massacre of 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians outside Hatshepsut Temple at Luxor was characteristic of a leader who tends to act without fanfare, but decisively. In a rapid move, Police Maj. Gen. Habib El-Adli was appointed as the new minister of the interior.

Mubarak flew to Luxor from Cairo 24 hours after the killings occurred. He took pains to piece together exactly what had happened, talking to officials but also interviewing eye-witnesses, guides and shopkeepers. His insistence on conducting investigations himself was a measure of his anger at security officials, whom he publicly rebuked for laxity and negligence. On television, he was seen furiously telling them: "You have failed." At another point he described security measures as "a joke."

From Luxor, the president flew to the Red Sea resorts of Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh for brief visits, during which he mingled and chatted casually with tourists. His intention was clear. He wanted to put across the point that he cared personally; furthermore, as his own presence demonstrated, security generally was in good shape despite the tragedy, which was an exception and not the rule.

There is little doubt that terror attacks are designed to deprive the national economy of a major source of foreign currency. The current flurry of cancellations, however, is a temporary knee-jerk reaction of the sort witnessed in the wake of previous terrorist attacks. We may also expect a serious commitment to tightening security at tourist sites under the supervision of a top-level committee headed by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and including Defence Minister Hussein Tantawi.

In the face of a threat to national security, and the terrorists' persistent attempts to inflict permanent damage on the tourist industry and the Egyptian economy, the authorities should indeed enlist the help of the Armed Forces whenever necessary. It is the public, however, in its vehement opposition to wanton violence of this kind, which will be the government's most trustworthy ally.

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The Saddam phenomenon

In the Arab world, support for the Iraqi president's antics is born of despair and discrimination, writes James Zogby. Solve the root problems, and the audience for his blatant, sometimes outrageous challenges to US hegemony will disappear

Ron Walters, a professor of political science at the University of Maryland and one of the leading African-American intellectuals, was once asked to explain the "Farrakhan phenomenon", a reference to Minister Louis Farrakhan, the current leader of the movement in the US known as the Nation of Islam.

"Farrakhan," Walters responded, "can best be understood as the measure of the depth of black alienation from white America." This alienation, Walters continued, was felt at every level of African-American society: the poor, the young and unemployed, and even those successful and well-established blacks who have been scarred by discrimination. Since, in varying degrees, many have experienced this alienation, the appeal of Farrakhan is broader than his actual membership.

The minister's appeal is in his blatant and often times outrageous challenge to dominant American culture. When he defies the authorities or denounces major institutions, he strikes a responsive chord. And because his appeal is based on deeply-felt alienation, when he is attacked, it becomes even stronger.

In this regard, the Farrakhan phenomenon is as much a psychological manifestation of anger and alienation as it is a political phenomenon.

What is clear to the majority of African-American leaders is that this phenomenon is not a solution to the dilemmas faced by their community. Farrakhan, and the support he receives, is a symptom of the problems facing black America, not its cure.

I have thought of this model during the past week as I watched the displays of pro-Saddam sentiment in Iraq, Cairo, Ramallah, and Gaza. The point I am seeking to make became clearer as I spoke to callers on my call-in radio and TV programmes on ANA-TV in the US.

What was being played out in the demonstrations and the phone calls was a measure of the depth of Arab alienation from the existing world order. In almost every instance, there was anger. Anger at US "double standards", at the failure of the world community to enforce resolutions against Iraq but not against Israel, and at the plight of the Iraqi people.

There was, in all of this, no real support for the regime in Iraq, and no real effort to excuse its abuses or its terror. But, and "but" is an overused word in these discussions, in each instance those who are angry and alienated respond "but what about Qana" or "but what about Netanyahu and Sharon," etc.

There is a connection between the failing peace process, the obstructionism of the Likud government, and the mood of anger and alienation that has clouded and captured the minds of many.

Former Secretary of State James Baker understood this well. Speaking before Congress on 4 September 1990, in the early stages of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, he addressed this issue. In response to a Congressman who asked why the US should continue to consider Palestinian needs when there were pro-Saddam rallies in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, Baker said, "One of the most telling arguments that Saddam Hussein makes is that he is the champion of the down-trodden. He [pretends to be] the champion of the Palestinians who have no place to go and who are sorely put-upon, and that is why I think... it is important that we keep our eye as well on the ball of moving... toward some resolution of that problem, because then the ground will not be as fertile as it is today."

There is only one reason why the Doha summit has not succeeded in gaining broad Arab support, the majority of the US's Arab allies are not supporting a US military response to Saddam's latest antics, and, on the "Arab street," as it is called, there is still "fertile ground". There is still, seven years after Baker spoke, a profound Arab sense of grievance with the West's failure to address legitimate Arab needs and aspirations.

What is most heartening is that major US newspapers have written extensively about this very issue in the past week. And within the US administration itself there is a growing debate. There is recognition that US foreign policy objectives are confounded by our failure to address the root causes of Arab alienation and by our failure to equitably address Arab rights and needs.

Saddam's outrageous provocations and the supportive response they elicit are not a solution. What has Iraq gained? The Security Council is now unanimous in its resolve to tighten sanctions. The Iraqi people will continue to suffer. And those who demonstrate out of anger are, sadly, no closer to freedom.

Similarly, simply striking the dictator down is not a solution in and of itself, since that could only cause alienation to grow. The regime in Iraq must comply with UN resolutions. But, for the credibility of that institution, and the US that stands behind it, there must be consistency.

There is a warning bell that must be heard if the Saddam phenomenon is to be understood and resolved. The legacy of discrimination and its consequences must be addressed. If, in Baker's words, the root causes of Arab despair and anger are addressed and resolved, the ground will not be so fertile, and Saddam will be playing to an unresponsive audience.

The writer is president of the Washington-based Arab-American Institute.

More Pyrrhic than real?

Will Washington have the wisdom to view the stand-off with Iraq within the larger regional context, or risk plunging the area into uncontrollable turmoil? Mohamed Sid-Ahmed analyses the volatile situation

The United States appeared to have scored a decisive victory against Saddam Hussein when it succeeded in pushing through a unanimous security council resolution calling for the immediate resumption of UNSCOM inspections of arms sites in Iraq, banning Iraqi officials who interfere with the inspectors from travelling abroad, condemning Iraq for threatening to expel American inspectors, and suspending further reviews of economic sanctions against Iraq until the inspectors certify that Baghdad is cooperating. However, the victory might be more Pyrrhic than real.

Saddam Hussein believed he could exploit the abstention of five Security Council members — including three, France, Russia and China, with veto powers — from voting further sanctions against Iraq in Resolution 1134 passed on 23 October last, to provoke a crack in the coalition and have the entire issue of sanctions revised. Of course, no member of the Security Council is ready to condone violations of its resolutions as a means to that end. But this week's Security Council condemnation of Iraq, though unanimous over the procedural aspect of the violation, betrayed two antipodal stands on substance. For some, notably the United States and the United Kingdom, there can be no hesitation in requiring compliance to Security Council resolutions from a rogue state which dared invade another UN member state; for others, Iraq's compliance is a necessary prerequisite for reconsidering the issue of lifting sanctions, if only to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people after seven years of crippling hardship.

A key issue of contention between the permanent members of the Security Council is whether military action, which will further compound the suffering of the Iraqi people, should be used to compel Saddam Hussein to comply with Council resolutions. Reflecting this divergence of views, a warning of 'serious consequences' if Iraq did not comply with UNSCOM's inspection rules contained in an early American draft of the UN resolution was dropped from the final formulation. But Saddam's gamble that the US will not resort to force seems to be based not only on global considerations but also on regional developments.

The Iraqi ruler is obviously betting not only on the fact that what for a while seemed to be a unipolar world order is gradually acquiring a multipolar character, and hence that he can play on contradictions between leading powers, but also that the peace process in the Middle East has reached an unprecedented low.

Conditions were fulfilled for the Middle East peace conference in Madrid in the aftermath of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait when, in the eyes of the oil regimes in the Arabian peninsula, an Arab leader came to represent a more immediate threat than Israel. The peace process was welcomed by those regimes as a means of neutralising the Israeli threat so that they could focus on defeating the Iraqi threat. But since Netanyahu's accession to power, no Arab ruler can be perceived by them as a greater evil. Cashing in on this new rationale, Saddam now raises the slogan of Arab unity.

The Security Council's condemnation of Iraq came 24 hours after Cairo announced that Egypt was boycotting the Qatar Economic Conference. President Mubarak took a final decision on the matter after consultations with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd. The situation now is that three key moderate Arab states, all friends of the United States, namely, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Morocco, are boycotting the Doha conference despite US insistence that it be held on schedule, in the presence of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Arab states consider a conference aimed at promoting economic ties between Arabs and Israelis to be counterproductive at a time bilateral talks between Arab states and Israel, even the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, remain totally stalled. Netanyahu's strategy towards the peace process has made it more difficult than ever for Washington to resort to military action against Saddam. Actually, the Clinton administration's approach to Middle East issues, which is based on Martin Indyk's 'double containment' policy of isolating both Iraq and Iran, is backfiring with respect to both countries. In December, Tehran will be playing host to an Islamic conference which is expected to be attended by many influential Arab states, another clear snub to the United States.

Saddam's brinkmanship in expelling the American inspectors, which provoked the pullout of all inspectors from Iraq, can drive Washington to resort to military force, even if other considerations, both regional and global, would plead for avoiding that option. What is certain is that Saddam's re-emergence at the forefront of the Middle East stage, side by side with Netanyahu's uncompromising stands, threaten to plunge the whole region into uncontrollable turmoil. The Luxor massacre is a forerunner of such a danger. Will President Clinton, in whose hands the final decision regarding military action against Iraq lies, have the wisdom to avert this worst-case scenario?

A capital choice

By Naguib Mahfouz

Private capital plays a very important role in our society. It is much more than a question of helping the needy, and has become an essential source for progress in the community, especially in a free market economy where the government relinquishes many of its traditional responsibilities. Private capital plays a role in scientific research and in supporting arts and literature as well as in public health.

Until recently, however, investors did not have much confidence in the economic situation. Those who did were often reluctant to invest their money in charitable or social ventures, preferring to reinvest in profit-making enterprises. This trend was reinforced by the fact that many capitalists today are unaccustomed to their newfound wealth, and unaware of their new social role in the communityr. Wealthy segments of society still hand out donations in a spirit of charity, not out of conviction that private capital has a crucial role to play in the development of different sectors of society.

It is high time, I believe, for capitalist entrepreneurs to undertake their responsibilities towards society, and invest a portion of their profits in ventures that will benefit the community as a whole. Perhaps this is the wisest investment of all.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week — Boycott messages

Al-Shaab: "The biggest blow to US foreign policy since the end of the Cold War is Egypt's unwillingness to continue to follow the US lead and its assumption of an independent leading role within the Arab-Iranian alliance. At the time of the last Arab summit I said that the US administration would not forgive President Mubarak for leading the opposition against its pro-Zionist policies. I now say that US hostility (to Mubarak) will increase — the US now considers Mubarak as its number one enemy for challenging its supremacy in the region. It will now do everything in its power to halt this pronounced change in the Egyptian position towards independence of action. We say all this to Mubarak to warn him and to urge him to strengthen his home front in order that this may help him in confronting outside dangers."
(Adel Hussein, 14 November)

October: "We are no longer asking the Israeli government whether it wants peace because we are convinced it does not. It blocks every attempt by the Arabs to reach a final settlement. Frankly speaking, we are not asking Netanyahu what he intends to do, but direct the question to the US president. If the US cannot impose justice and legality on Israel as it has done with Iraq, Sudan and Libya, how can it claim to be the leader of the new world order? And on what basis can it claim to be the strategic friend of the Arabs?"
(Editorial, 16 November)

Rose El-Youssef: "The peace process started by Sadat is being hampered by Netanyahu, but the whole world knows that peace was initiated by Egypt and the current difficulties are due to Israel. In my opinion, Netanyahu can hold up the peace process, but he cannot kill it, because not only the Arabs but also the Israelis themselves demand it. Sooner or later Netanyahu will go and someone else will continue the peace process — that's the lesson of history, even if Netanyahu doesn't like it."
(Mahmoud El-Tohamy, 17 November)

Al-Arabi: "The important question at the moment is: will the decision to boycott the Doha conference be sufficient? I fear not, because Washington will not forgive Cairo its public "mutiny" and will mobilise all its resources through the media, Congress, secret service, international financing agencies etc... to punish Egypt.
What is required at the moment is a new strategy which will take the Doha decision as the basis for shaking off the tentacles of US control of the region so that the nation can breathe clean air free of US-Zionist microbes!"
(Emadeddin Hussein, 17 November)

Al-Gomhuria: "The most remarkable thing about the Egyptian position is its ability to withstand intense US pressure to participate in the Doha conference. The US had tried to portray participation as a way to get round Netanyahu's intransigence and to move the stalled peace process forward. Egypt's and the Arab world's firmness in the face of pressures underlines their independence of action and shows a new and realistic view of the US role in the peace process, and the inadvisability of putting all their eggs in the White House basket, which has previously led to disaster."
(Salah Eissa, 13 November)

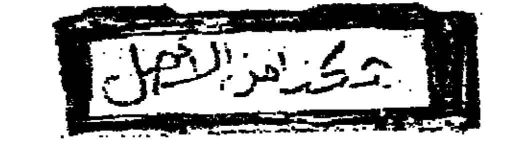
Al-Ahram: "There is no doubt that Israel has now realised that the massive Arab boycott of Doha, in spite of US pressures, means that there is no place for it in the Arab world. There is no question of normalisation or joint economic ventures so long as its policy is one that is hostile to peace. And it also realises that ill-conceived calls to establish a dialogue with the advocates of peace in Israel will not succeed, since there is no difference between the Likud and Labour. There really is no difference between Netanyahu, who delights in frustrating the Palestinian leadership each day, Shimon Peres, the butcher of Qana, and Ehud Barak, the new Labour Party leader whose hands are stained with the blood of Palestinian martyrs."
(Ihsan Bakr, 16 November)

Compiled by **Hala Saqr**



Every time we used to meet, I would find myself irresistibly drawn to the face of the late Seadeddin Wahba: once as a painter, the next time as a sculptor. The leonine head, like a woodcarving of a mediaeval knight, invariably had me searching for this knight's horse.

I would pretend to listen to him, but would in fact be drawing him, whether on paper or in my mind. It is as a powerful, solid figure on the stage of life that I remember him now, although the curtain has fallen.



Close up

Salama A. Salama

Arab consensus

With the exception of the US and British governments, or more specifically *with* the exception of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, no one has advocated a military solution to the crisis in Iraq triggered this time by the participation of US inspectors in UNSCOM.

France, China, Russia and Egypt have all strongly opposed sending any signals which may be read as authorising a US military operation against Iraq. In addition, all the Arab *states, including* Saudi Arabia, have informed the US that they are opposed to the military option.

The most recent and most significant opposition to the military option, however, was voiced by Al-Sabbah Ahmed Al-Sabbah, *the Kuwaiti* foreign minister, who declared during his visit to Egypt that his country was opposed to any military operation against Baghdad.

The Arab consensus reflects the crisis of US credibility, not only vis-à-vis the *situation* in the Middle East and the peace problem with Israel, but also with respect to the artificially precipitated showdown with Iraq.

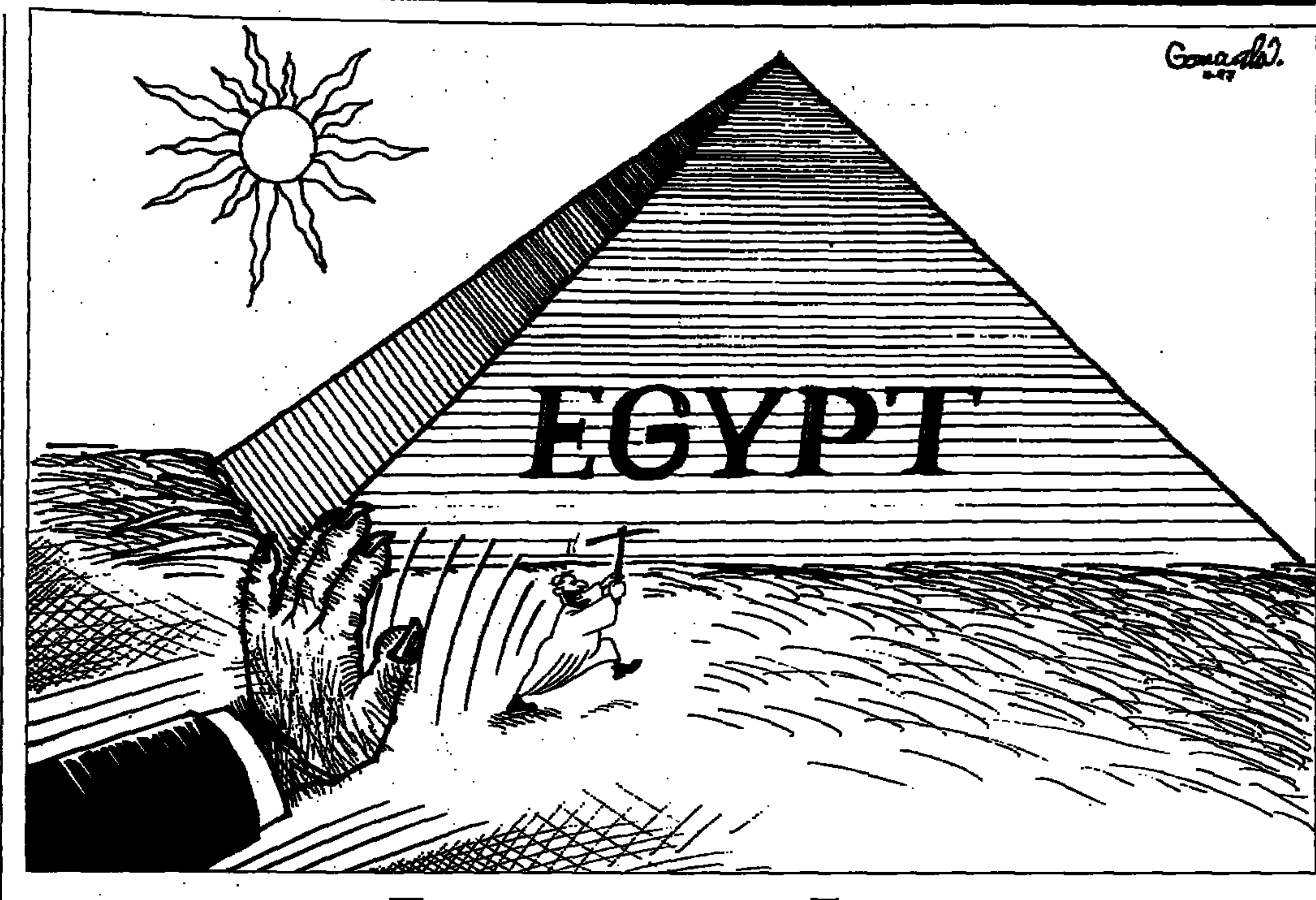
A few days before this spontaneous manifestation of *Arab solidarity against* the military option, the majority of Arab countries had decided to boycott the Doha conference. Arab solidarity in both instances may suggest that the very principles which sealed the Arab-American coalition *during* the *Gulf* War have since been eroded and become meaningless, due to the US's failure to honour its commitments in establishing a *just peace in the region*, as well as its unhesitating commitment to Israel's "protection", in any and every situation.

In fact, fear that Saddam Hussein's regime posed a threat to the Gulf states, the *US's weapon in justifying* its continued military presence in the Gulf and its military operations against Iraq (whenever Iraq was slack in *cooperating with the UN* inspection team), is no longer an effective weapon, nor a sufficiently convincing one as far as the Arab states are concerned. Twice in the aftermath of the Gulf War, in 1993 and 1996, Washington *launched* Cruz *missiles* against Baghdad under the pretext of quelling Iraqi threats to Gulf security. On both occasions, the US was intervening in purely Iraqi domestic affairs. On the second occasion, the civil war with the Kurds was raging in northern Iraq, an opportunity usually seized by Turkey, leading to the erosion of Iraq's control over that vital *part of its national territory*.

After seven years of this inadequate US policy, the Iraqi regime is *still* in place. *Stability* has not been restored to the Gulf region; nor has Iraq been cleansed of weapons of mass destruction, contrary to *US claims. Despite mediation* and intervention, the Kurdish problem is still unresolved. Thus, most Arab countries have started to reconsider this policy, which has compromised inter-Arab and Arab-US relations and exposed *the entire Gulf region*, including relations with Turkey and Iran, to doubts and tensions. The only beneficiary of the policy seems to be the US, which sold billions of dollars worth of arms to the Gulf states.

Despite the efforts of US Secretary of State Albright to stop over in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait during her most recent visit to the region, she has failed to close the widening confidence gap between the Gulf and her *country*. The Gulf states are indeed realising that the sanctions and the boycott of Iraq have not produced the desired results. The Gulf states are being blamed by other Arab states as being morally, ethically and religiously responsible for the *suffering of* the Iraqi people. In addition, US policy has splintered the Arab nation and compromised its stability by encouraging *subversion*.

Hence, it is only logical that the Arab parties favour the diplomatic option. It is also in the best interest of the Iraqi regime to respond *to* the Arab consensus which opposes military sanctions. The solution to this problem in a manner that serves the interests of the Iraqi people and *responds* to international pressures and UN resolutions, could well be the starting point for the normalisation of relations between Iraq and the Gulf states, and a means of convincing the international community that maintaining the sanctions for an unlimited duration, serves US *and* British interests alone, and will by no means topple the regime in Baghdad.



Soapbox

A fateful visit?

On 19 November 1977, Anwar El-Sadat traveled to Israel after having made what seemed an arbitrary decision. He appeared pleased to carry out his plan, intending to leave everyone gaping, either in admiration or outrage.

Twenty years after that "ill-fated" visit, a question remains: did Sadat's visit destroy our greatest strength following the victory of 6 October? This strength was the "boycott" of the state occupying Palestinian land. This boycott could have deprived the occupier of the many rights and freedoms it now enjoys, thanks to the legitimacy conferred upon it in part by Sadat's visit.

Was Sadat's visit an improvisation, a random decision? Or was he trying to reveal to the nation a bitter reality that *had remained concealed since* Nasser's acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242, which stipulated "safe and recognised borders for Israel"?

Was Sadat's visit the beginning? Or a step towards the conclusion? The generation to which I belong witnessed the defeat of the Arab armies in 1948. To us, the 23 July Revolution represented the first step toward a 'sacred' objective: the liberation of Palestine. We could not ignore what was *clearly the right*, the *only* solution: in explicit terms, the liberation of all Palestinian land, the restoration of the Golan, securing Sinai, and ridding south Lebanon of Zionist enclaves.

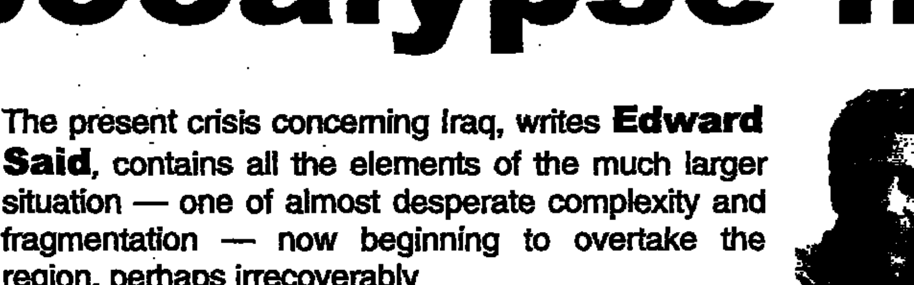
To those who rejected Sadat's ill-fated visit of November 1977, who condemned Resolution 242 and the Camp David Accords, Netanyahu embodies the ultimate impossibility of the Zionists' presence on Palestinian land and in the Arab world.

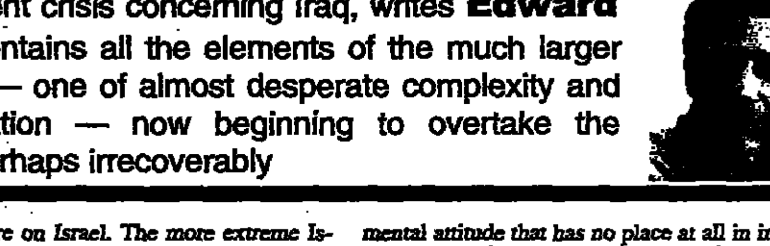


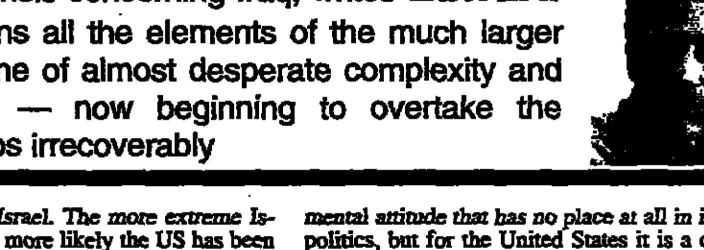
This week's Soapbox speaker is a senior journalist and theatre critic.

Safynaz Kazem

Apocalypse now







The present crisis concerning Iraq, writes **Edward Said**, contains all the elements of the much larger situation — one of almost desperate complexity and fragmentation — now beginning to overtake the region, perhaps irrecoverably





It would be a mistake, I think, to reduce what is happening between Iraq and the United States *simply* to an assertion of Arab will and sovereignty versus American imperialism, which undoubtedly plays a central role in all this. However misguided, Saddam Hussein's cleverness is not that he is splitting America *from its allies (which he has not really succeeded* in doing for any practical purpose), but that he is exploiting the astonishing clumsiness and failures of US foreign policy. Very few people, least of all Saddam himself, can be fooled into believing him to be the innocent victim of American bullying; *most of what is* happening to his unfortunate people, who are undergoing the most dreadful and unacknowleged suffering, is due in considerable degree to his callous cynicism — first of all, his indefensible and ruinous *invasion of Kuwait, his persecution of the Kurds, his* cruel egoism and pompous self-regard which persists in aggrandising himself and his regime at exorbitant and, in my opinion, totally unwarranted cost. It is impossible for him to plead the case for national secur*ity and sovereignty now, given his abysmal disregard* of it in the case of Kuwait and Iran.

Be that as it may, US vindictiveness, whose sources I shall look at in a moment, has exacerbated the situation by imposing a regime of sanctions which, as Sandy Berger, the American National Security adviser, recently said, is unprecedented for its severity in the whole of world history. A staggering 567,000 Iraqi civilians have died since the Gulf War, mostly as a result of disease, malnutrition and deplorably poor med*ical care. Agriculture and industry* are at a total *standstill*. This is unconscionable, of course, and for this, the brazen inhumanity of American policy-makers is also very largely to blame. But we must not forget that Saddam is feeding that inhumanity quite deliberately *in order to dramatise* the opposition between the US and the rest of the Arab world; having provoked a crisis with the US (or the UN dominated by the US), he at first dramatised the unfairness of the sanctions. But by continuing it as he is now doing, the issue has changed and has become his non-compliance. The terrible effects of the sanctions have been marginalised. Still, the underlying causes of an Arab/US crisis remain.

A careful analysis of that crisis is imperative. The US has always opposed any sign of Arab nationalism or independence, partly for its own imperial reasons and partly because its unconditional support for Israel requires it to do so. *Since* the 1973 War, and despite the brief oil embargo, Arab policy up to and including the peace process has tried to circumvent or mitigate that hostility by appealing to the US for help, by "good" behaviour, by willingness to make peace with Israel. Yet mere compliance with the *US's wishes can* produce nothing except occasional words of American approbation for leaders who appear "moderate": Arab policy was never backed up with coordination, collective pressure, or fully agreed-upon goals. Instead, each *leader tried to make separate* arrangements both with the US and with Israel, none of which produced very much except escalating demands and a constant refusal by the US to exert any *meaningful pressure on Israel. The more extreme* Israeli policy becomes, the more likely the US has been to support it — and the less respect it has for the large mass of Arab peoples whose future and well-being are mortgaged to illusory hopes embodied, for *instance, in the Oslo accords.*

Moreover, a deep gulf separates Arab culture and civilisation from the United States. In the absence of any collective Arab information and cultural policy, the notion of an Arab people with traditions, cultures *and identities of its own is simply inadmissible in the* US. Arabs are dehumanised; they are seen as violent irrational terrorists always on the lookout for murder and bombing outrages. The only Arabs worth doing business with for the US are compliant leaders, busi*nessmen, military people whose arms purchases (the* highest per capita in the world) are helping the American economy keep afloat. Beyond that, there is no feeling at all, for instance, for the dreadful suffering of the Iraqi people, whose identity and existence have *simply been lost sight of in the present situation.*

This morbid, obsessional fear and hatred of the Arabs has been a constant theme in US foreign policy since World War II. In some way also, anything positive about the Arabs is seen in the US as a threat to Israel. In this respect, *pro-Israeli American Jews*, traditional Orientalists, and military hawks have played a devastating role. Moral opprobrium is heaped on Arab states as it is on no others. Turkey, for example, has been conducting a campaign against the Kurds for *several years*, yet nothing is heard about this in the US. Israel occupies territory illegally for 30 years, it violates the Geneva conventions at will, conducts invasions, terrorist attacks and assassinations against Arabs, and still, the US vetoes every sanction against it in the UN. Syria, Sudan, Libya, Iraq are classified as "rogue" states. Sanctions against them are far harsher than against any other country in the history of US foreign policy. *And still the US expects that its* own foreign policy agenda ought to prevail (e.g., the woefully misguided Doha economic summit) despite its hostility to the collective Arab agenda.

In the case of Iraq, a number of further extenuations make the *US* even more repressive. *Burning in the* collective American unconscious is a puritanical zeal decreeing the sternest possible attitude towards anyone deemed to be an unregenerate sinner. This clearly guided American policy towards the native American *Indians, who were first demonised*, then portrayed as wasteful savages, then exterminated, their tiny remnant confined to reservations and concentration camps. This almost religious anger fuels a judge*mental attitude that has no place at all in international* politics, but for the United States it is a central tenet of its worldwide behaviour. Second, punishment is conceived in apocalyptic terms. During the Vietnam war, a leading general advocated — and almost *achieved — the goal of bombing the enemy into the* stone age. The same view prevailed during the Gulf War in 1991. Sinners are meant to be condemned terminally, with the utmost cruelty, regardless of whether or not they suffer the cruelest agonies. The notion *of "justified" punishment for Iraq is now uppermost* in the minds of most American consumers of news, and with that goes an almost orgiastic delight in the gathering power being summoned to confront Iraq in the Gulf.

Pictures of immense aircraft carriers steaming virtuously away punctuate breathless news bulletins about Saddam's defiance, and the impending crisis. The President announces that he is thinking not about the Gulf but about the 21st century: how can we tolerate *Iraq's threat to use biological warfare — even though* (this is unmentioned) it is clear from the UNSCOM reports that he has neither the missile capacity, nor the chemical arms, nor the nuclear arsenal, nor in fact the anthrax bombs that he is alleged to be brandishing? Forgotten in all this is that the US has all the terror weapons known to humankind, is the only country to have used a nuclear bomb on civilians, and, as recently as seven years ago, dropped 66,000 tons of bombs on Iraq. As the only country involved in this crisis that has never had to fight a war on its own soil, it is easy for the US and its mostly brainwashed citizens to speak in apocalyptic terms. A report out of Australia on Sunday 16 November suggests that Israel and the US are thinking about a neutron bomb on Baghdad.

Unfortunately, the dictates of raw power are very severe and, for a weak state like Iraq, overwhelming. Certainly, US misuse of the sanctions to strip Iraq of everything, including any possibility of security, is monstrously sadistic. The so-called UN 661 Committee created to oversee the sanctions is composed of 15 member states (including the US), each of which has a veto. Every time *Iraq* passes this committee a request to sell oil for medicines, trucks, meat, etc., any member of the committee can block these requests by saying that a given item may have military purposes (tires, for example, or ambulances). *In addition the US and its clients — e.g., the* unpleasant and racist Richard Butler, who says openly that Arabs have a different notion of truth than the rest of the world — have made it clear that, even if Iraq is completely reduced militarily to the point *where it* is no longer a threat to *its* neighbours (which is now the case), the real goal of the sanctions is to topple Saddam Hussein's government. In other words, according to the US, very little that Iraq can do short of Saddam's resignation or death will produce a lift*ing of sanctions.*

Finally, we should not for a moment forget that, quite apart from its foreign policy interest, Iraq has now become a domestic American issue with very important repercussions on issues unrelated to oil or the Gulf. Bill Clinton's *personal crises* — the campaign-funding scandals, an impending trial for sexual harassment, his various legislative and domestic failures — require him to look strong, determined and "presidential" somewhere else, and where but in the *Gulf*, against Iraq, has he *so ready-made* a foreign devil to set off his blue-eyed strength to full advantage. Moreover, there is the increase in military expenditure for new investments in electronic "smart" weaponry, more sophisticated aircraft, mo*bile forces for the world-wide projection* of American power, perfectly suited for display and use in the Gulf, where the likelihood of visible casualties (actually suffering Iraqi civilians) is extremely small, and where the new military technology can be put through its paces most attractively. For reasons that need restating here, the media is particularly happy to go along with the government in bringing home to domestic customers the wonderful excitement of American self-righteousness, the proud flag-waving, the "feel-good" sense that "we" are facing *down* a monstrous dictator. Far from analysis and calm reflection, the media exists mainly to derive its mission from the government, not to produce a corrective or any dissent. The media, in short, is an extension of the war against Iraq.

The saddest aspect of the whole thing is that Iraqi civilians seem condemned to additional suffering and protracted agony. Neither their government nor that of the US is inclined to ease the daily pressure on them, and the probability that only they will pay for the crisis is extremely high. At least — and it isn't very much — there seems to be no enthusiasm among Arab governments for American military action, but beyond that there is no coordinated Arab position, not even on the extremely grave humanitarian question. It is unfortunate that, according to the news, there is rising popular support for Saddam in the Arab world, as if the old lessons of defiance without real power have still not been learned. Undoubtedly the US has manipulated the UN to its own ends, a rather shameful exercise given at the same time that the Congress once again struck down a motion to pay a billion dol*lars in arrears to the world organisation. The major* priority for Arabs, Europeans, Muslims and Americans is to push to the fore the issue of sanctions and the terrible suffering imposed on innocent Iraqi civilians. Taking the case to the International Court in *the Hague strikes me as a perfectly viable possibility*, but what is needed is a concerted will on behalf of Arabs who have suffered the US's egregious blows for too long without an adequate response.

Reflections By Hani Shukrallah

Strategies of scale

The bloodbath in the Valley of the Queens has shocked the nation as few other events have in many years. The Egyptian public is seething with anger. The sheer scale of the carnage, its unnatural brutality, the fact that it is the first-ever terrorist attack to take place in the militant-free city of Luxor, the fact that it came when armed Islamist militancy was apparently in its death throes, and of course the mind-boggling laxity and negligence it has revealed, all these have combined to make the initial reaction of Egyptians as unprecedented as the incident itself is. *Indeed, no other incident in the 16-year* confrontation between Islamist militancy and the state has claimed as many lives since the attempted Jihad insurgency in Assiut in the immediate aftermath of Sadat's assassination in October 1981.

One would hope, therefore, that the sense of horror *and* shock that has gripped the nation in the past couple of days will not dissipate before the significance, ramifications and lessons of the temple massacre are pondered with the seriousness they deserve; that the lessons drawn will imply more than the *immediate and surgical response of* a change of interior ministers and a resolve to further "tighten security"; finally, that we will look well beyond the relative health of the next tourist season and the rather obvious reaction of deploying scores of anti-terrorism police guards at historic and other tourist sites in the country.

The real *lessons* to be discerned from the incident lie, in fact, in its paradoxical nature: the most devastating armed attack by Islamist militants is a function not of the failure, but rather of the "success" of the massive, "no-holds" security clampdown on Islamist militancy during the past years, and in particular since the militants began their second offensive in 1992. Shielded by a 16-year-long state of emergency, the strategy adopted by the security bodies in the confrontation with the Islamists was more a strategy of scale than skill.

Coming down like a tonne of bricks is perhaps the most delicate way of describing that strategy, dependent as it has been on the deployment of massive force, and drawing on emergency regulations to net as wide a circle of suspects as *possible*, and keep them in detention for as long as possible.

The state security bodies eventually succeeded in effectively destroying the organisational structures of the militant organisations, first the tightly-knit Jihad and, some time later, the bigger and more mass-based Gama'a Islamiya. *They virtually eradicated their influence in the* poverty belts of Cairo, Alexandria and other major cities and towns in lower Egypt, with the net result that armed Islamist militancy was more or less 'contained' in a number of resistant 'pockets' in Upper Egypt, the groups reduced to "remnants" largely on the run from the police.

But this success itself produced two significant counter-effects. The more far-reaching of the two is the blood vendetta that has been created in Upper Egypt's clan-based society. Pursuing their "tonne of bricks" strategy, the police often seemed to be waging fierce battles against whole villages and urban districts rather than what always was a minority group of militants. This has tremendously sharpened the age-old sense of humiliation and animosity that many Upper Egyptians feel towards the central government in Cairo. *Extreme poverty, deprivation* and the hopelessness they create continue to hold Upper Egypt in their grip, notwithstanding the promised, but yet to be delivered "trickle-down effects" of economic reform. In a region where arms have always been *plentiful* and blood vendettas have been known to decimate whole clans — lasting long after their origins are forgotten or made redundant — continuing deprivation and police heavy-handedness could only breed new militants where others have been eradicated.

Moreover, the success of the security bodies in effectively destroying the militants' organisational structures has had the effect of producing runaway groups of local desperadoes, hunted and desperate, with no strategic per*spective or political sophistication (however ab*horrent these may be), but bent only on wreaking as much "death and destruction" as they can, before they themselves are caught or killed. It is almost certain that one such group carried out the brutal massacre in Luxor this week.

Such groups, by their very "ad hoc" nature, can be hunted but not eradicated. And how much of the country can be policed? Indeed, the wider the policing net is spread, the less efficient it becomes and the more loopholes can be found in it. It is such loopholes, now in front of Hatshepsut's Temple, some weeks ago *before the Egyptian Museum in Cairo*, that these groups await.

There is another, no less important, lesson that needs to be underlined. The effects of a state of emergency and the heavy-handed po*lice bodies it creates* are not confined to their purpose alone. They are felt to varying degrees of intensity by the people as a whole, more so the lower down the social ladder a person happens to stand. The anger felt by the Egyptian public at the Luxor massacre expressed empathy with the victims and abhorrence of *the violence* and *brutality* of the militants. But in part, it was directed at the security bodies whose precautions in Luxor, after 16 years of emergency law, were described as "a joke" by none other than the *president himself*.

A picture for today

The foyer of the main Al-Ahram building on Galaa Street is currently given over to an exhibition highlighting contemporary Egyptian art. Included in the show, in which many of Egypt's best known artists have been invited to contribute a single piece, are most of the regular names that dominate the gallery circuit. Perhaps the feeling of homogeneity in the exhibited works is a function of the pieces being, necessarily, more or less the same size. Certainly, a number of themes appear constant — a continuing interest in landscape, residual in several seemingly abstract works, but most often picturesque. The past, too, inevitably rears its omniscient head — in hieratic figure studies, and the architectural components of numerous backgrounds. And in the landscapes, too, overwhelmingly pastoral, it is nostalgia, which is in essence a reimagining of the past, that has the final say.
Abstraction, in the last years of the present century, presents more and more problems. It seems peculiarly unsuited to anything in particular: far over the horizon are the bright, heroic days of the modernist avant garde. And so it is, in this more or less accurate overview of the discrete, portable and decorative works that comprise the overwhelming the bulk of contemporary practice that difficult paintings are few and far between. The tenor seems to be towards the populist, towards art that is easy to live with.
For details of venue, see Listings



Ezzeddin Naguib



The Quartetto d'archi di Roma

Sound dreams and nightmares

Wondrous, wondrous, then not quite. **David Blake** wakes up to sleep again

Ensemble Orchestral de Paris; soloist Paul Meyer (clarinet); conductor Pascale Rophé: Main Hall, Cairo Opera House: 15 November

This, the first of two concerts given in Cairo by this very special orchestra, was a distillation of a French emanation — style. The word "style" and the thing it stands for have no real meaning. It just is. There are academic formulas for it, but they merely point the way. And the way, especially the French style in music, goes far beyond formulas, is indeed incomprehensible.

Incomprehensibles are a great stand-by and stimulus these days against the *ordinaire* which approaches from all sides like the dead march. This concert was outside the formula and far away, very much in another dimension. Anywhere, everywhere and nowhere. It was too good to be true.

Debussy moved in these incomprehensible dimensions, like Couperin, Ravel and Boulez. Formulas these masters have not. They are the adept physicians of an extra ear. Maybe it is *chauve-sourie* music.

The *Epigraphes antiques* are meditations on sound itself, like Scelsi's and the poems of Mallarmée. They create their own meaning, neither formal nor narrative. They spill over from one aspect of existence to another. Maybe reptiles or moths hear music like the *Epigraphes*. "Of what use is moth music to me" breathes the *ordinaire* down the composer's neck.

These pieces are miracles, so exactly put together they seem to be matter itself. Debussy had at least a thousand ears. He wrote these pieces for himself. We in the Opera House were intruders. The orchestra was therefore a projection of him and this the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris demonstrated with great art. Gifted players, no wonder the famous and exciting wish to perform with them.

Next — Mozart at his most profound, majestic and insolent. No particular idiom because idiomatic, where the classics are concerned, is out.

Cairo in these last weeks has had two revelatory musicians passing through. Nasir Shama with his *oud* and now Paul Meyer in this Mozart *Clarinet Concerto K 622*. Coming from different cultures and musical backgrounds they are one in their total dedication to the music they play. So total, it is a lifetime's memory to encounter them in action.

Meyer like Shama cannot really be discussed as a technician. They both leave the performing aspect behind them. They evoke — that is about all that can be said of them. Meyer found in Benny Goodman a counsellor who helped him to effortlessly cross the barrier from the 18th to the 20th century, leaving behind him the loose baggage of entire generations. Meyer's approach is so direct and unvarnished by tradition and his energy and force are so fresh they seem to belong to jazz.

He makes a direct frontal confrontation in this well known and respected masterpiece. The three movements seem melded into one song line. When he played, all the architecture fell to pieces. The clarinet is a wind instrument. The music it makes seems to be air, without boundaries or moments of rest.

After the loss and disorientation of the middle part of this concerto, he flew at the last section like a being of retribution. Standing rigid on the stage, tall and purposeful as the music, he raced to the end, making for his final resolution, and grabbed his clarinet with fists clenched as if it was a rod of fire. The moment had come and he was Tamino of *The Magic Flute*, one of the rarest of instruments himself, bringing tears of joy not pain.

The intermission came and after it, as if the Mozart were not enough, Meyer played a composition called *Taqassim for clarinet and orchestra* by Ahmed El-Saedi, with another sort of devination.

The piece breaks into two sections, difficult to listen to, but as with all El-Saedi's works, brief and to the point. Meyer, known for his interest in 20th century compositions, made it sound plausible, this savage onslaught on the basic music traditions, but without any of the absurdities of total revolution. Like *The Magic Flute*, we heard how to break through the sound barriers of the chaos of now into a new form of growth.

Stravinsky came last with the suite called *Pulcinella*. Once a ballet, it was rearranged and now belongs in the classic-mod department. The music shows its age. Viewed half a century later, it is nice, chic, full of tricks and small shocks, smart, but events have left it now far behind. Poking fun and making jests, these now sound tame in the nineties. It is trivial, neither disturbing nor witty.

The Paris Orchestra, under its conductor Pascale Rophé, found a way to deal with it — tact. It's a ghost, so be gentle, it will soon go away. In its own time it does, in a collection of small, chilly dance pieces to which the orchestra gave a heart. To Stravinsky what mattered most was clarity. Rophé and his wonderful orchestra certainly gave it this.

Some beautiful things developed, buffoons with cornets, playful onslaughts of trombones. We ended in a nursery. No jokes however could erase the shining lights of Mozart.

Quartetto d'archi di Roma: Small Hall, Cairo Opera House: 14 November

Another accent, the Italian, of an eagerly awaited visit of the Quartet di Roma.

Perish the thought. Fate seemed against the quartet on this night in spite of a generous welcome from a big audience. The Small Hall was in no mood for pleasure. When this phenomenon occurs, send the performing angels back home — the Hall won't deliver the sound. What happens? Some nights and with some players, it dazzles sharply — a cutting edge, but an edge at least. Some other nights, no matter whom or however illustrious, it refuses everything. Nothing budges its scowl. A bad tempered face is never a joy, so pack up the flowers and put them on ice for another night's performance, but farewell to this one.

The quartet from Rome was good. It makes lovely sounds. This night, however, the Teatro Piccolo dell'opera del Cairo had other intentions. Maybe no inclination for the music offered.

They began with Donizetti. Generous. His *Quartet no 5* is in four long movements.

Donizetti is one of opera's grandest melodists. His songs and arias, formal pieces, sextets and duets form part of the basic repertory of any opera house in the world. He is unique. The orchestration is clear, beautifully composed, always apt for the characters in the drama.

One goes to his chamber music expecting probably too much, or the wrong thing. Lucrezia Borgia and the melting melodies with which he surrounded her, the exciting grandeur of the male arias from *Lucia* and the majestic inspiration of the *Lucia* sextet haunt any listener. What we get in the *Quartet no 5* is not even meat of another persuasion. It is gruel. Nice, neat, healthy and stodgy. Difficult for even the talents of the Quartet di Roma to enliven. They did their best, but where were Donizetti's famous key changes? E flat major to C major that sets the hearing aids buzzing is nowhere in the no 5.

Perhaps Donizetti had an inferiority complex. His operatic genius was not enough for him. He wanted classic respectability. So we wade through the four long movements of the five, yearning for *The Daughter of the Regiment* or *Maria Stuarda*. Not a thrill, not a tear in sight.

Then Puccini's *Crisantemi*. Can this be the composer of the dazzle and wit of *Boheme* or the drama and pathos of *Tosca* explaining how she will escape from Rome for a happy life? Whoever wants to escape from Rome? Apparently, strangely enough, Puccini did. This piece marked "tempo unico" bore signs of the Viennese School for which Puccini had a *tendresse* which shows in *Turandot* and *The Girl of the Golden West*. He was sharply probing and daring as a composer. How comes *Crisantemi*? Completely untypical, our palette starved for at least one surge of piquante *slancio*.

Safe with Beethoven at least? Not a chance. The *Rasumovsky op 59 no 8* fluttered along down a path that was neither Beethoven nor Nussen Dorma.

Maybe next visit the Roma Quartet could play in the warm hospitality of the Goumhouriya Theatre and we could hear their excellence.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Dimitri Papadimos
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, American University in Cairo, Mohamed Mahmoud St. Tel 357 5422. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 20 Nov.
Sixty-eight black and white photographs by the Greek artist, entitled Gourna 48, showing the village built by Hassan Fathy.

Mohamed Mandour (Pottery)
British Council Gallery, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza. Tel 303 1514. Daily 9am-9pm. Until 21 Nov.

Youth Salon
Centre of Arts, 1, Maahad El-Swissri, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Until 23 Nov.
Annual showing of new works by young artists.

Contemporary Egyptian Art (Paintings)
Exhibition Hall, Al-Ahram Building, El-Galaa St, Boulaq. Tel 578 6100. Daily 9am-10pm.

Hassan Aziz Hassan (Paintings) & **Massimo Baistrocchi** (Graphic Designs)
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Daily exc Fri & Sat. Until 25 Nov.

Albrecht Dürer
Gallery of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Zamalek, c/o Goethe Institute, tel 575 9877. Until 25 Nov.
Fifty-six reproductions of sixteenth century woodworks.

The Eighth AUC Student Art Exhibition
Ewart Gallery, Main Campus, American University in Cairo, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. Daily exc Fri, 9am-9pm. Until 26 Nov.

Mostafa Kamal (Paintings)
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 27 Nov.

Ihab Shaker (Paintings)
Khan El-Maghraby Gallery, 18 El-Mansour Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 3349. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-9pm. Until 29 Nov.

Jerry Zeniuk (Paintings)
Cairo Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab Al-Louq. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 29 Nov.

Georges El-Bahgory (Paintings)
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily exc Fri, 11am-9pm. Until 30 Nov.
Recent works.

Egyptian Features (Photographs)
Mubarak Public Library, 70 El-Nil St, Agouza. Daily 11am-7pm. Until 30 Nov.
From the collection of Elwi Farid.

Fathy El-Khattib (Paintings)
French Cultural Centre, Heliopolis annex, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824. Opening 23 Nov, 7pm. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 2 Dec.

Group Show
Dania Gallery, 20 Abdel-Aziz Gawish St, Borg El-Ateba', Bab El-Louq. Tel 355 8367. Daily exc Fri, 12pm-10pm. Until 4 Dec.
Over 10 artists exhibit their work under the title Still Life.

Claire Kersten (Paintings)
Cairo Atelier, 2 Karim El-Dawla St, Downtown. Tel 574 6730. Opening 23 Nov, 7pm. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm, 6pm-9pm. Until 5 Dec.
Works under the title The Other Way Round.

Silvia Baechli (Drawings) and **Eric Hattan** (Photographs)
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Opening 23 Nov, 7pm. Daily 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 6-9pm. Until 5 Dec.

Wafaï Rifaat (Sculpture) and **Farouk Shehata** (Paintings)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 6 Dec.

Italian Drawings of the 1990s
Centre of Arts, 1 El-Maahad El-Swissri St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Opening 20 Nov, 7pm. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1.30pm & 7.30pm-9pm. Until 10 Dec.

Members of the Photographic Salon of Egypt
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, American Uniersity in Cairo, Mohamed Mahmoud St. Tel 357 5424. Opening 24 Nov, 7pm. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 23 Dec.
Under the title Along the Southeast Border, are displayed the photographs of Raafat Abdalla, Reda El-Danaf, Wahid Noureddin and Ibrahim El-Orabi, which capture the people and the villages of the longforgotten tribes of the southeast desert mountains and the Red Sea hills.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 342 0601. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.
A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.
A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956).

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
Permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar.

FILMS

Conflagration
Japanese Information and Culture Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. Tel 354 9431. 20 Nov, 6pm:
Directed by Ichikawa Kon.

Italian Films
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791.
22 Nov, 6pm: **Il Conformista**, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci.
23 Nov, 6pm: **La Strategia Del Ragno**, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci.

French and Lebanese Films
French Cultural Centre, 1 Madraset El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679.
20 Nov, 4pm: **Entrée Ecole Sortie Cinéma**, directed by Jean-Louis Comolli.
20 Nov, 7pm: **Petits Arrangements Avec Les Morts**, directed by Pascal Ferran.
23 Nov, 7pm: **An El-Awan**, directed by Jean-Claude Ghadban.
24 Nov, 7pm: **El-Sheikha**, directed by Leila Assaf.
25 Nov, 7pm: **El-A'ssar**, directed by Samir Habachi.
26 Nov, 7pm: **Khareg El-Haya**, directed by Maroun Bagdadi.

Mother Kuster's Trip to Heaven
Goethe Institute, 5 Abdel-Salam Aref St (ex Bustan St), Downtown. Tel 575 9877. 26 Nov, 6.30pm.
Directed by Werner Fassbinder.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

Face/Off
Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm; Thur-Sat midnight show. Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
An intelligent and entertaining action film with John Travolta and Nicolas Cage.

Batman And Robin
El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 591 6095. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Arnold Schwarzenegger, George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Uma Thurman and Alicia Silverstone.

Kull The Conqueror
Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 3.30pm & 6.30pm. Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Mostafa Kamal

My Best Friend's Wedding
El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight.
With Julia Roberts.

Speed 2
Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Sandra Bullock and Jason Patric.

Father's Day
Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
With Robin Williams, Nastassia Kinski and Billy Chrystal.

Volcano
Odeon II, Abdel-Hamid Said St., Downtown, Tel 575 8797.
With Tommy Lee Jones.

Ismailia Rayeh Gaey (Ismailia Back and Forth)
Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Odeon I, Abdel-Hamid Said St., Downtown. Tel 575 8797 Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 1am, 3pm, 6.pm & 9.pm. Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm.
With Hanan Tork, Khaled El-Nabawi, Mohamed Heneidi and singer Mohamed Fouad.

Hanheb We Ne'eb (We'll Love and Rise Above)
Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 1am, 3pm, 6.pm & 9pm. Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Farouq El-Fishawi.

El-Masir (Le Destin)
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 592 4830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Odeon III, Abdel-Hamid Said St., Downtown. Tel 575 8797 Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Youssef Chahine's latest production, with Nour El-Sherif, Leila Elwi, Mahmoud Hemeida and Safeiya El-Emari.

Afreet El-Nahar (Daytime Demon)
Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Nour El-Sherif and Elham Shahin.

DANCE

Swan Lake
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 20 & 21 Nov, 8pm.
Performed by the Cairo Opera Company.

MUSIC

The Perusina Symphonia
Gomhouriya Theatre, Gomhouriya Sq, Abdin. Tel 391 9956.
21 Nov, 9pm: Performing G. B. Pergolesi's Stabat Mater.
22 Nov, 9pm: Performing Antonio Salieri's L'Arlecchinata, directed by Vera Bertinetti.

Concert of the Talent Development Centre
Small Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 20 Nov, 8pm.

Jazz Recital
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 21 & 22 Nov, 8pm.
Yehia Khalil performs.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 22 Nov, 8pm.
Compositions by Verdi, conducted by Alexander Frey.

Horn and Percussion Recital
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 24 Nov, 8pm.
With Amr Abul-Naga (percussion) and Nesma Abdel-Aziz (horn).

Amadeus Chamber Orchestra
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 25 Nov, 8pm.
Conducted by Mostafa Nagui.

The Guilghall String Ensemble
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 25 Nov, 8pm.

Russian Children Dance and Song Troupe
Gomhouriya Theatre, Gomhouriya Sq, Abdin. Tel 391 9956. 24-26 Nov, 9.30am & 12pm.

Sharara String Sextet
Ewart Hall, Main Campus, American University in Cairo, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5436. 26 Nov, 8pm.
The sextet directed by Attia Sharara perform selections of Baligh Hamdy and others.

THEATRE

Blue Heart
National, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 1267. 20 & 21 Nov, 8pm.
Caryl Churchill's double bill performed by the British Out of Joint Theatre Company.

Kiss Me Kate
Wallace Theatre, Greek Campus, American University in Cairo, Mohamed Mahmoud St. Tel 357 6373. Until 22 Nov, 8pm.
The AUC Theatre Company, directed by Krista Scott and choreographed by Indji El-Solh, base their performance on the music and lyrics by Cole Porter and the book by Sam and Bella Spewack.

Ballo (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Nasr City. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm; Thur 9.30pm.

Taht El-Tahdid (Under Threat)
El-Talia, Ataba Square, Downtown. Tel 5937 948. Daily 9.30pm.

El-Establ (The Stable)
El-Talia, as above. Daily 8pm.

Zizo Mahboub Zamanoh (Zizo the Beloved of His Time)
Floating Theatre, Adjacent to University Bridge, Manial. Tel 364 9516. Daily 10.30am.

Alabanda
El-Fardos Theatre, El-Beohth Sq. Tel 482 3017. Daily 8.30pm. Thur 9.30pm.

Cinderella
Puppet Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 0954. Daily 6.30pm; Fri & Sun 11am.

LECTURES

Tutankhamun's Wardrobe: The Final Results
Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies, 1 Mahmoud Azmi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 0076. 20 Nov, 5.30pm.
Lecture by Dr Gillian Vegelsang, Textile Research Centre, Leiden.

The Ottoman Turks (1517-1805) and Mohamed Ali (1805-1845)
American Research Centre, 2 Simon Bolivar Sq, Garden City. Tel 354 8239. 24 Nov, 5pm.
The last of the five slide-lecture series on the Islamic architecture of Cairo, by William Lyster.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo.
Tel 5786064.
Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by ***Injy El-Kashef***

Around the galleries

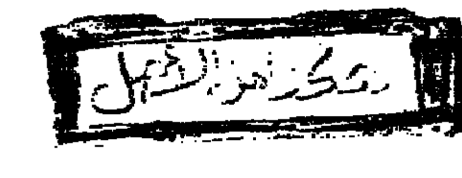


Mohamed Mandour

CHILDREN exhibit their work at the gallery attached to the **Faculty of Art Education**, Zamalek. Bright, spontaneous, uninhibited, dealing with subjects ranging from ancient monuments to seascapes, these are the fruit of their labour at this summer children's art course offered at the Faculty.

The **British Council Gallery** shows pottery by **Mohamed Mandour**. These are, without doubt, very technically accomplished and, in terms of form, the vessels manage to be innovative and original while at the same time remaining rooted in tradition.

Reviewed by ***Nagwa El-Ashri***



Plays and politics: In the theatre, as in life, Saadeddin Wahba, who died last week, refused to compromise his beliefs

A long day's journey into light

Nehad Selaiha traces Saadeddin Wahba's journey from his native village to the boards of the National



From left: Tawfiq El-Deqn, Saadeddin Wahba and Shafiq Noureddin

The road Wahba travelled from the sleepy village of Domeira in Daqahliya where he arrived into the world on 4 February 1925, to the redoubtable National Theatre in Ataba Square was a long and tortuous one. It swung him first across the Delta to the city of Damanhour and, six years later, carried him further north to Alexandria in the middle of thick air raids and heavy bombing. Throughout his life, Wahba cherished both cities and spoke of them with affection. Of the former he says, in the third volume of his Diary (published by El-Fajr, 1994-5), "it lives in my consciousness until today and will continue to do so until I depart this world. It is my town, though I was not born there, my home, though I do not officially belong to it. There, I learnt about life and discovered the meaning of things; its primary school gave me my first educational certificate and its big secondary school, which lay on its outskirts, hosted me for a year before the war (second world war) forced us to move out." The town's municipal library, into which he "stumbled shyly one day," introduced him to the world of reading, and there he wrote his first short story which was never published. In Damanhour, too, at its municipal cinema, he watched his first movies (of which he particularly recalled Mohamed Abdel-Wahab's *The White Rose*) and got his first experience of theatre when Yusuf Wahbi visited the town with his company on tour and performed famous plays in their repertoire like *The Children of the Poor* and *Rasputin*.

In those days, the gifted children of many country folk had to grow up early and travel far in search of schools, and learn to live on their own, away from their families if they wanted to pursue their education. Wahba was no exception; at the age of 10, or thereabouts, he was living alone in Damanhour, in rented lodgings, "a small room in a house which cost me 10 piasters a month and whose main advantage was that its window was next to a street lamp which saved on the cost of the kerosene lamp I used for doing my school-work." The first day Wahba stepped into Damanhour alone, he instinctively slipped into the role of a grown man and did exactly like his father: "I bought the paper (*Al-Jihad*) which cost me 5 milliemes and drank tea at Al-Shaweesh café which stood next to the primary school, facing a small square where *basbousa*, *fuul*, *libb* and *hummus* vendors always took their place." Still acting the grown man, he took part in the 1935 violent demonstrations, shouting with the rest 'down with Hore' "without knowing at the time that the 'cursed' Hore was Hore-Belisha, the British foreign secretary" (Diary, 3, p.231). His first contact with the police, whose ranks he was to join a few years later, took place during these demonstrations and ironically took the form of a painful blow with a truncheon.

In 1941, the Wahba family was reunited in Alexandria where his father had moved to manage the vast estate of Prince Omar Touson there. Compared to Damanhour, life in Alexandria was overwhelmingly dramatic: the constant air raids, the sounds of the battle in nearby Alamein, "clearly heard at dawn", "the hot shrapnel that burnt our fingers as we eagerly collected it off the roof after every all-clear siren," and, of course, the old bookstores, the well-stocked municipal library, and the many theatres and cinemas.

The vague intimations of the future destiny he had felt as a lonely boy in Damanhour became more conscious and clearly defined for the adolescent Saad. He read voraciously, regularly frequented the cinemas and theatres, published his first article (in *Minbar Al-Sharq* newspaper in 1942), wrote his first play while in the fifth form at El-Raml Secondary School and directed it himself for the end-of-school celebration, and adapted Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Radobis* for the stage and sold it, on the advice of his Arabic teacher, to the Girls College in Gianaclis for LE5 (Diary 1, 23-26). He also taught himself English after watching the film version of Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* at the Rex movie house and from Maugham he graduated to reading Shakespeare, Ibsen and Oscar Wilde. Equally important in those formative years was Wahba's exposure for a whole month (the month of Ramadan) to Naguib El-Rihani's comedies at El-Ibrahimiya Theatre. He had watched the famous Ramses company perform tragedies and melodramas in Damanhour and Alexandria, and admired Yusuf Wahbi as Rasputin and Zeinab Sidqi in *La Dame aux Camelias*, but it was obviously comedy, with its ordinary and ridiculous men and women and strong ties with social reality that captured his imagination and kept him going to the theatre every night for a whole month.

Nothing that Wahba did in these early years points in the direction of a career as a police officer, and nothing in his Diary explains why he joined the Police Academy upon finishing his secondary education. Asked about this once in a public meeting, he jocularly replied: "My father insisted. I must have been very naughty." This flagrant detour, however, was to prove a valuable asset in later years, providing Wahba with an almost inexhaustible store of images, anecdotes and characters. The year he spent at the Menouf police station immediately after his graduation in '49 was particularly lucrative: it formed the basic of Wahba's first play, *El-Mahrousa*, providing the material, the social model, the character types, the setting, atmosphere and total message, and continued to haunt his work, dramatic and otherwise, until the end of his days.

Wahba's career as a police officer was very short-lived, spanning only a few years. Back in Alexandria after his one year service in Menouf, he joined Alexandria University as a full-time student (despite his job duties) to read philosophy and got his degree in 1955. The same year he was transferred to Cairo and immediately made his way into *Rose El-Youssef* as a junior reporter on criminal matters. It did not seem an auspicious beginning, but it meant that he was back on track. He left the police officially in '56, but he had "virtually stopped being a police officer a year and a half earlier," as he says. Then followed a period of intense literary and journalistic activity: in '57 he founded the Police Magazine (*Migallat Al-Police*); the following year he launched a monthly literary publication, *Migallat Al-Shahr*, which continued until Feb '62, and published *Arzaq* (Dispensations), his first collection of short stories. By 1960, Wahba had become acknowledged as a writer with revolutionary views and pronounced socialist leanings, and was therefore accepted into state-run mainstream journalism and given the post of managing editor of Radio (and later Radio and Television) magazine. Indeed, a year earlier, when he was contributing a weekly political article to one of the papers issued by Al-Tahrir publishing house (he does not specify which), he had had it on good authority that President Nasser himself admired his political writing (Diary, 3, 126-27).

From journalism to the stage was a very short step in those days: both were regarded as political public forums. Indeed, literary activity and political activism are often indistinguishable in this period and seem like extensions of each other. More than any other genre, drama was regarded as the most effective in disseminating the new ideas and rallying the people to the revolutionary cause. Almost every writer worth his salt, including Naguib Mahfouz, attempted drama at least once, and so did Wahba, who was more suited to the medium than most. *El-Mahrousa*, which opened the National's season in December '61, was a great success with the audience and the critics and marked the beginning of an intense dramatic career which spanned 20 years and produced in all 16 full-length and 18 one-act plays.

photo: Antoune Albert

Viewed in its historical context, this rich dramatic output seems part of a general movement, started by No'man Ashour in the early fifties with plays like The Magnet, The People Downstairs and The People Upstairs, to rehabilitate both comedy and the vernacular and join them in a realistic form of drama at once popular and capable of serious political and social criticism. Unlike Ashour, however, Wahba refused to be bound by the conventional urban setting of traditional Egyptian comedy and opted in his first four plays (*El-Mahrousa*, '61, *Kafr El-Battikh*, '62, Third Class, '63, and *Mosquito Bridge*, '64) for a rural one. More refreshing and interesting still was Wahba's dramaturgy which did away with plot, in the conventional sense, linear progression and main characters and replaced them with a cumulative, anecdotal type of structure which gradually builds up the setting and its inhabitants into a microcosm of Egyptian society and a metaphor for human oppression and frustration in general. In these plays, and many that followed, the stock situations, devices and stereotypes of traditional comedy are deftly exploited and modified, while the bubbling surface humour of the dialogue betrays an acute sense of tragedy, and the realistic representation often gives way to caricature or grotesque absurdity.

After *Mosquito Bridge*, which featured a sad assortment of lost souls caught between two worlds and unable to make the transition and completely belong to either, Wahba left the world of the village behind him. His next, and most popular, play, *Sikkat El-Salamah* (The Road to Safety), interpreted by many as a clear political warning to the regime which seemed at the time to have lost direction, is set in the desert where a group of passengers have lost their way. Very little happens in the play and the dramatic action consists of their varying and contrapuntally orchestrated reactions to the crisis and interactions with each other. More than in any of his other plays, the verbal texture here, which ranges from lyrical, confessional monologues to sharp comic repartee, reveals Wahba's ability to generate poetry and create character, meaning, mood and atmosphere out of ordinary human speech.

In terms of mood, theme and linguistic patterning, Wahba's next play, *Stairwell*, 1966, forms, with *The Road to Safety* and *Mosquito Bridge*, a sombre and disturbing trilogy which communicates a sense of approaching doom. In all three, the basic situation features a group of lost souls trapped in a kind of wasteland and the central theme is waiting. Evoking the autumnal mood of Chekov's twilight world and the harsh aridity of Beckettland, the trilogy chronicles Wahba's growing disillusionment with the regime, and his deepening anxiety and sense of despair.

The traumatic defeat in '67 was paradoxically at once shattering and liberating. The worst had come to pass and that was cathartic: dramatists could now say openly what fear or hope of reform had led them to qualify or coach in dramatic metaphors. The result was more outspoken plays which, though valuable for morale-building and consciousness-raising, were sadly of only topical relevance and limited value. *Wahba's Nails*, '67, *The Professor*, '69, and *Seven Waterwheels*, *Antar's Stable*, and *Lo and Behold, The Wall Has Spoken*, '70-71, belong to this category and mark Wahba's departure from the symbolic-realistic mode into a mode of historical fantasy with features from Brecht's epic theatre.

In the following year, however, he went back to realistic comedy and social satire, his real forte, producing in succession *Sad El-Hanak* (Gobstopper) '72, *Sab' walla Dhab'* (Any Luck?), '73, and *Ras El-'ish* (The Nest's Head), '74, then a long string of one-act plays some of which were performed in triple-bills in '78 and '79. His last play was Antar '83 in which he updated his earlier *Antar's Stable*.

Like most of his generation of writers, Wahba had his fair share of censorship and some of his plays, like *The Professor* (which had its first performance in 1980 though written in '69), were completely suppressed at the time, while others, like *The Stairwell* reach the stage only after ferocious battles. Away from the theatre too, his outspokenness won him many enemies, and in 1975 he found himself the subject of a smear-campaign and sacked from the Ministry of Culture where had served in various capacities and invested six years of his life (from '69 to '75) in the building and promotion of the mass culture apparatus. But Wahba was not the kind of person to take injustice lying down, and after two years of fighting to clear his name he was reinstated. Three years later, he handed in his resignation and set out in search of broader stages and new roles. It was goodbye to drama.

Or was it? Perhaps it was goodbye to only one kind of drama. During the last 17 years of his life, Wahba was twice a member of the People's Assembly, head of the Egyptian Artists Unions, the Arab Artists Union and, finally, though briefly, of the Egyptian Writers' Union. He continued to be a dashing, dynamic, charismatic figure and 'trouble-maker', stirring many a stagnant pool and triggering off many dramatic battles — artistic, cultural and political. In those last valuable years too, he devoted more attention to his second passion, the cinema. He had never strayed very far from it, even when he publicly seemed eternally wedded to the theatre. His work in the Ministry of Culture had brought him in close contact with the cinema industry, and off and on he wrote screen-plays, some of which rank among the most memorable in the history of Egyptian films. In the mid-eighties, after what he must have deemed a decent period of separation from the theatre, he decided to publicly announce cinema as his lawfully wedded wife in an international ceremony which came to be known as The Cairo International Film Festival. The wedding anniversary was punctually observed and celebrated every year, and this year, though Wahba has left us, is to be no exception. With his policeman's discipline, he made sure before he left that all the preparations had been made and everything was in order. After a gruelling radio-therapy spell in Paris, he refused to rest. The press conference in which he launched this year's festival was his last public appearance and a kind of public farewell. He went home, and the next afternoon he was dead. He simply slipped away while asleep. Perfect dramatic timing till the very end.

'Activist and thinker to the last'

Mahmoud Amin El-Alim, critic

It was in 1955, I remember, when as the editor of the culture pages of *Rose El-Youssef*, I received a visit from a large officer with a pleasant face. Very politely, and with modesty, he presented me with a short-story he was hoping to get published. I read it, liked it, and published it in *Rose El-Youssef*. It was probably Saadeddin Wahba's first published literary work.

From then on, I followed his literary progress, reading first his short-stories and then his plays. In the sixties he managed to transform the face of Egyptian theatre through plays that were always artistically rewarding — in terms of their dialogue or dramatic structure — as well as providing coherent social criticism.

Then, when I was put in charge of Dar El-Katib El-Arabi [the state publishing house], I was asked by the political leadership, a few days before the 1967 war, to travel to France. I left on 4 June and Wahba stood in for me in my absence. During this period he seemed to published a new bulletin almost every day under the title "The Battle". It was almost as if he was fighting on the actual battle field. He turned Dar El-Katib El-Arabi into a bastion of resistance during the war and into a centre for morale raising after the defeat.

When he became head of the Organisation of Popular Culture I continued to follow his career. Wahba became the dynamo of the organisation, instilling life into these centres of popular culture throughout Egypt, travelling across the country to establish the infrastructure for these centres. His great managerial skills were subsequently put to use when he assumed control of the Cairo International Film Festival.

On the Egyptian literary scene, Wahba acted as a unifying force, as in the case of the Egyptian Writers' Union. A great many Egyptian writers would not set foot in the Union, yet after Wahba became its head some months ago the organisation became a lively literary centre. He adopted strong positions on national and Arab political issues, and his stance towards subjects such as privatisation remained unequivocal to the end.

He was also very vocal in his anti-normalisation stand, and continued to the last minute of his life to expose the expansionist, Zionist nature of Israel and deride those individuals and states that espouse normalisation. It is not that he was against peace, but he wanted a just peace. Among many other activities, Wahba formed — and headed — the Forum of Egyptian Intellectuals following the election of Netanyahu. He was, to borrow Gramsci's expression, an "organic intellectual", balancing theory and practice, opinions and work. He was an activist thinker to the last.

Radwa Ashour, novelist

The death of Saadeddin Wahba is a loss to both the Egyptian and Arab cultural scenes. This is not simply because Wahba was one of the pioneers of realistic drama, but also because of the role he had played in recent years as a writer, and more specifically, as head of the Egyptian Writers' Union, the Arab Artists' Union and the Cairo International Film Festival. His activities within all these organisations was invariably informed by an acute awareness of the strategic interests of Egypt and the Arab nation. His refusal of any normalisation with Israel was typical of his conviction that any relationship with the Zionist establishment, with its continuing aggression against the Arabs, particularly the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples, remained beneath intellectuals whom it is assumed are committed to values such as human justice and the legitimate right of peoples to defend themselves. In the many posts he occupied in the final years of his life, in his articles and in the stands he took, Wahba remained consistent in never shirking the responsibilities that grew out of his convictions.

Ali El-Ra'i, critic

It seems to me that the key to Saadeddin Wahba's personality can be found in his ambition, from the very start, to be a public figure, a man who could operate in many arenas. No surprise, then, that he should have felt his officer's uniform a strait-jacket that prevented him from expressing himself freely. He soon abandoned the police service and sought to reach out to people through literature.

He soon discovered, though, that the reading public was too limited an audience. It seems to me that what he felt then is not unlike what Bernard Shaw felt when he gave up writing novels, after having published five of them. Shaw declared that writing a novel was like being involved in an impossible relationship with a woman, and that was why he was abandoning the novel in favour of writing plays. Writing for the theatre, Shaw believed, was a far more effective way of reaching people than speeches, articles or demonstrations. But Shaw was to discover that dramatic writing brought its own pitfalls: his first plays met with disapproval. One of them was banned for three years.

Saadeddin Wahba was luckier. The 1952 Revolution unleashed great wells of talent and anyone who felt it in him to give voice to the hardships and the hopes of the people felt encouraged to write. And Wahba chose to write plays, plays which showed him to be fully in tune with the aims of the revolution though later he was to oscillate between support, astute criticism and protest — couched in symbolism — against certain practices of the regime.

Wahba also worked in other fields, most notably the cinema, popular culture, journalism and politics in the broadest sense.

He adopted a particularly uncompromising stand towards the Zionist enemy. He openly resisted all moves towards normalisation, which he believed meant nothing other than falling into a Zionist trap.

Atef Salem, film director, film director

The death of Saadeddin Wahba deprives us of a distinguished writer and a great revolutionary. His plays — and Wahba's contribution to theatre was more outstanding than his contribution to cinema — were always informed by a message, charged with an undertow of irony directed at social ills. I consider his corpus of plays a treasure and hope that they will be broadcast to commemorate their author.

Back in the days when the Egyptian film industry was public sector, Wahba headed a production company that made some excellent films. As head of the Cairo International Film Festival, he was always candid about the mistakes and shortcomings of any particular year. Tellingly, such mistakes were never repeated.

Interviews by Weekly staff

Plain Talk

This is neither an obituary of Saadeddin Wahba, nor an appraisal of his dramatic works; it comprises reminiscences of a lifelong companionship that started in the late '50s. And if there is sadness in calling these memories to mind at this time, it is a sadness ameliorated by moments of shared joy.

From 1967 onwards, Wahba and I worked together at the Ministry of Culture. That year, I was advisor to Dr Tharwat Okasha, the minister of culture, and Wahba was under-secretary of state. Given the resemblance in our names, we sometimes had our correspondence mixed up — I would receive letters addressed to Mursi Saad El-Din Wahba, and we would try and figure out to which of us the letter was addressed.

Following our years at the ministry, I had the pleasure of working with Wahba at the Cairo International Film Festival, which will always be associated with his name. To him goes the credit of transforming the festival from a half-baked, lukewarm event into a successful enterprise. I remember him saying, in the tones of a proud father: "In 1986 we were a festival at which prizes were not awarded by the International Union of Film Producers, but in 1990, after we reviewed the festival, we were allowed to give prizes... We are now among the top eight international festivals."

Saadeddin Wahba wore many hats: in addition to heading the Cairo International Film Festival, he was president of the Cairo International Festival of Children's Films and of the General Union of Arab Artists. Lately he was also elected president of the Writers' Union. He was also a member of the Supreme Council of Culture and the Board of Trustees of the Radio and Television Union.

In many ways Wahba was a survivor. His forthright nature always landed him in trouble with his superiors. But after every fall from grace he always managed to stage a comeback, unscathed — he dictating the conditions of his return and returning stronger than ever. All this I watched at close quarters, always admiring him as a man who consistently stood up for what he believed in. One often disagreed with him, but one could not help but respect him.

Wahba had a passion for innovation and whatever post he held he managed to introduce something new and to turn failures into successes. His tenure at the helm of the Organisation for Popular Culture is a glowing example of this quality. When he took over, the organisation was nothing more than a dump for mediocre Ministry of Culture employees. Within a few months it had changed into a department which ran some of the most successful programmes. Wisely, he recruited young people, creating a sort of militia, so that we used to say he was planning a coup d'etat.

He was a man who liked to create around himself an aura of importance and authority. With his tall, upright, military gait it came naturally to him. While in the many posts he occupied he usually had a big staff at his beck and call, there was nothing bossy about him. Yet in spite of the towering, dignified figure he cut, and in contrast to it, he produced some of the most hilarious comedies and melodramas. He was a prolific playwright as well as a writer of short-stories. In his newspaper articles, too, Wahba was unflinching in his campaigns against corruption, even if it involved high-placed figures.

This year's round of the Cairo International Film Festival is due to open soon. The man who gave the event such a high profile on the international scene will not be there. However, Wahba's team has vowed to make this year's festival the success its champion would have wished.

Mursi Saad El-Din

A boudoir bestiary

It is often said that clothes have a language, writes **Fayza Hassan**. For women of the Egyptian elite, they have, for the best part of a century and a half, spoken French





This year, Dior's John Galliano has drawn on various periods of history and the costumes of several continents to create his unique Winter 1998 Collection. Pharaonic, African and *Directoire* influences expressed an eclectic tendency, and extravagant splendour reigned supreme.

The corsetry so memorably sported by Scarlet O'Hara (top, far left), was equally breathtaking in 1750 or 1910 (top), or reinterpreted by Galliano for Dior in 1998 (bottom row). Right: Pharaonic splendour fit for any queen

Rifa'a El-Tahtawi, who accompanied the first study mission to France in the 1830s, was probably among the first Egyptian fans of French fashion: "Women's clothes are beautiful," he wrote on this first voyage: "they [French women] dress with coquetry, especially when they wear their most precious adornments. They do not, however, own a great deal of jewellery... they favour delicate fabrics, silks and light cottons. When the weather is cold, they cover themselves with furs, which they place around their necks, letting the ends dangle almost to their feet... On warm days, they are used to uncovering the extremities of their bodies: they disrobe from the head to the beginning of the bust in such a way that their back can be seen. Their arms are bare in their ball gowns. People in this country do not consider such practices as indecent. [Women's] legs are never uncovered, nevertheless; they constantly wear stockings to conceal their legs, especially when they go out in the street..." (Jean-Charles Depaule, "Le vetement comme métaphore?" in *Egypte Monde Arabe*, 3/90, CEDEJ).

This description was not lost on women in Cairo and Alexandria, who were quick to emulate their French sisters, especially after the move to discard the veil had spread among the women of Egypt's upper classes. A century later, in an article which appeared in *Al-Ithnein* magazine (6 December 1943) under the heading "A misogynist launches the new fashion for women", Tewfik El-Hakim, who himself proclaimed his allegiance to the Enlightenment by sporting the beret, poked fun at women's financially ruinous habit of wearing silk stockings, and proposed some of his own designs, inspired by different folkloric traditions, as a more practical alternative, which had the additional benefit of keeping women's legs warm.

A cursory look at Egyptian press at the turn of the century, or a stroll down Qasr El-Nil Street at around noon in those days, as remembered by the older generation, leads one to believe that Parisian chic was the one and only reference. Hoda Sha'rawi's French-language monthly revue *L'Egyptienne*, which dealt primarily with "feminism, sociology and arts", published numerous advertisements for the more famous French fashion houses, boutiques and *grands magasins* — the latter often with established branches in Cairo, Alexandria and sometimes the provinces — in which the very latest in French fashion was displayed for the greatest convenience of the Egyptian clientele. One advertisement appeared several times in the magazine during 1930. "Elegant Egyptians, buy your clothes at Maggy Rouff, 136 Avenue des Champs Elysées," read the headline. "Madam", it continued, "We have the honour of informing you that Madame Zenab Fouad Bey, your compatriot, has joined our House as first saleslady. Madame Zenab Fouad Bey offers you her services as from now... She will reply at once, in Arabic if you wish, to your inquiries regarding styles and prices, allowing you to place your mail orders..."

Other advertisements in *L'Egyptienne* reflected the taste of the day in French jewellery, lingerie and footwear, with famous French brands taking out whole-page advertisements. On the other hand, department stores like Au Bon Marché on Emadeddin Street and Cicurel on Fouad I (now 26 July) Street displayed the latest in accessories, which arrived in Egypt almost at the same time as they appeared in the shops of the French capital, as well as many lesser designers' exclusive creations. Cairo and Alexandria also boasted *grandes couturières* like Salha Aflatoun and Salovati, to name only the most famous, who could reproduce and/or alter any *toile* purchased from the celebrated Parisian designers. Marthe, the well-frequented hat-maker on Qasr El-Nil Street, made exclusive bonnets, pillboxes and picture hats to order, following the designs of the latest fashion catalogues, while famous furrier Sistovaris, also on Qasr El-Nil Street, complemented the ladies' toilettes with the latest lines in indispensable mink and other exotic skins. He also offered professional refrigeration and storage services during the summer months.

French fashion experienced a lull in Egypt during the revolution and in its aftermath, but in the '80s, things began to pick up once more as the ripples of the Infitah spread. The Egyptian fashion industry came into its own, producing high-quality lines of casual wear as increased interest in more formal dress drew many towards the fashion capital of yore.

This year, major fashion events attracted an eager public in search of exclusive little numbers, essential for anyone keen to attend some of the lavish parties and weddings which add a special flavour to Cairene night life.

Laura Biagiotti and Christian Dior, for instance, have organised extravaganzas which surpassed in scale, splendour and spectacle the highlights of previous seasons. The shows, for which the "see and be seen" crowd turned out en masse, received rave reviews from a packed audience who had fought tooth and nail for seats. The Opera House was the venue for a lavish show sponsored by the South African television network M-Net and emceed by famous actor Omar El-Sherif. Nor was there a guilty conscience in sight: proceeds went to The Right to Live, a charity which caters for mentally-challenged children. Having done their good deed for the day, high society settled back to ooh and aah at Dior's 1998 Winter Collection, designed by John Galliano. The *tableaux vivants* which have come to replace the more traditional catwalk shows were highlighted by a backdrop of Ancient Egyptian temples. Models, looking both ethereal and a little supernatural, displayed breathtaking creations, some of which, after the first shock had worn off, were strangely similar to my great grandmother's Belle Epoque ball gowns, while others emulated a more extravagant version of her naughtiest underwear. Scintillating in their evening wear, Egyptian women were obviously willing and ready to adjust their diamond-studded watches to Paris time.

Underlying the glamour, the shimmer and shine, however, *haute couture* seems to have adapted itself to the new order in fashion. It has recognised the need to adjust its stringent standards to the realistic and the mundane, admitting the necessity to alter every one of its stunning creations on demand, to suit the measurements and particular needs of a clientele whose choices are now dictated by practicality, if not economics.



People-coloured glasses

Last week, hundreds of thousands of women gathered in Philadelphia to take part in the Million Woman March. All over the world, the media detailed the grievances of "women of colour".

"What does that make the others?" I asked my friends, who are always more *au courant* than I when it comes to women's rights. "Should we refer to some women as being colourless?" They huffed and puffed in disapproval of my crass ignorance of burning social and political issues, and condescendingly informed me that, had I looked up from my own pet subjects for an instant, even I would have noticed that this is a politically correct term.

I objected that it did not convey the intended message, as far as I was concerned. But then, I belong to the old guard and nowadays, I am ashamed to confess, I go through whole articles, written in the "right" jargon, and only get the general drift of the piece — sometimes not even that. In my own view, "a woman of colour" should conjure up the image of a modern Carmen Miranda, complete with straw mules and a flowing skirt, wearing rather too much makeup, vivid green eye shadow and purple lipstick, maybe, her head draped in a thousand shining scarves. When I hear of women of colour marching to claim equality, it immediately brings to mind a scene from the Rio carnival, probably seen once on television, featuring women in iridescent costumes, undulating down a wide street lined with gardens full of scented flowers, to the rhythm of a marching band, playing well-known sambas. Hardly the image women activists are endeavouring to project.

Oddly, however, I am unable to put a skin tone on these women of colour, a blindness I seem to have passed onto my daughters. On her first day at kindergarten, my older daughter, a gregarious little soul, made at least a dozen best friends. She informed me, nevertheless, that Claude and Miou were her real favourites. I may have assumed that the two little girls were French, judging by their names, but in any case, I never thought of quizzing my daughter as to their nationality, since I was already being treated to a detailed description of their outfits — obviously my daughter's only concern — on a daily basis. Miou seemed to own a large number of pairs of shoes in different styles, while Claude confined her fashion statements to the ribbons she wore in her hair. My daughter was savagely intent on promoting a spirit of competition between her friends' parents and her own. Why did I not buy her a collection of footwear equal to that of Miou; did Miou's mother love her more? Miou had a new pair of shoes almost every day, while she only owned the one ugly pair "that she hated". As for my daughter's hair, the teachers seemed to have no preoccupation other than insisting that she should tie it neatly in plaits or a pony-tail, secured with ribbons similar to the coveted specimens belonging to Claude.

I was a firm believer in boots which held young children's ankles securely in place, and which promised, as a bonus, a well-arched foot in the future. Hair, on the other hand, was my daughter's best feature, I thought: hers was unusually long and healthy, with a lovely propensity to shine in the sun. Motherly vanity prevented me from restraining its flow in any way. I pointed out to her that she owned a pencil case that was surely nicer than any other in her class, and that the little frilly socks I had just bought her probably made her friends green with envy. She would shrug impatiently at my soothing explanations, muttering that she was sure now that her friends' mothers were much more loving than her own.

We had a big party for my daughter's birthday that year, and the whole class was invited. It was quite a cosmopolitan gathering, since the school took both Egyptian and foreign children. Busy channelling the energy of the little crowd into less than completely destructive activities, I forgot to look for the two favourites whose fashion antics were making my life miserable. Finally the crowd started to thin and the inevitable question was popped: "Can Claude and Miou sleep over, please, please?..." My eyes went directly to the unusually small feet of one of the girls. She was indeed wearing tiny, extremely elegant, black patent leather shoes, obviously made to measure. I noticed in passing a detail that had never come up in my daughter's descriptions of her little friends. Miou (Mi Yu, actually) was Chinese. Claude — the ribbon owner — on the other hand, was African, her hair tightly plaited not only with colourful ribbons, but with beads as well. "See," said my daughter triumphantly, showing me one of the little girl's plaits, "her mother put beads in her hair specially for my party." I shuddered at the thought that beads were going to be next on my daughter's "want" list. But I was lucky for once. "My mother said that next week she will do her hair exactly like mine," Claude informed me proudly. Miou's face suddenly crumpled. Tears seemed imminent. "Fine, but tell your mother to do Miou's hair too," I hastened to say, rewarded immediately by the child's radiant smile.

Not long ago, sitting with my daughter by the pool in her Florida home, we were reminiscing about her early childhood in Cairo and the names of her kindergarten friends came up. "Did you ever notice that your friends were not 'white'?" I joked, alluding to the fact that her own children are growing up in an all-white neighbourhood. She reflected for a while. "I don't remember them as being different," she said finally. "Only more spoiled than me, and I was jealous. But," she added, "I bet my children would have noticed their colour right away!"

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Veal piccata with mushrooms

Ingredients:
1 kg. veal steaks (thin)
1 large onion (thinly sliced)
2 cans of mushrooms (in brine)
1 cup meat or chicken stock
2 tsp. white flour
2 tsp. lemon juice
2 tsp. soy sauce
Butter
Salt+pepper+allspice

Method:
Slightly season the veal steaks with salt and pepper. Fry them brown in butter. Remove and leave aside. In the remaining grease, add the flour. Stir fry it gently. Add the stock and stir to form a gravy. Add the fried steaks. Lower the heat, season, cover and allow to cook for 15-20 minutes. Add boiling water or stock if necessary. In another pan, gently fry the onion until golden. Add the gravy without the steaks. Add the mushrooms with the brine of one can, the lemon juice and the soy sauce. Bring to a boil. Lower the heat and leave to simmer for 5 minutes. Add the steaks and mix all ingredients gently together and heat. Remove from heat. Pour into a serving dish and serve with rice and a rich green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

You need Hans

Andrew Steele drops his shrimps

It has always been a hoary old stand by for residents of Heliopolis. Consistent, if not spectacular food, in salubrious enough settings. Even the added attraction of the hunt: some years ago, whilst dining there to celebrate a friend's birthday, a house mouse scurried across Audrey's toes. Shrieks and dissension ensued. But we were offered a free dish if we caught and killed it.

I like a restaurant with a peccadillo. Things change, however, and no self respecting rodent would be seen dead in the new look Hans. It has far too much of a freshly painted sheen, the furnishings and fittings are simply no longer tawdry enough to house flea-bitten vermin. A certain amount of tack remains, but it's gleaming tack, not a smudge to be seen. The menu has undergone a downsizing on the Chinese/Korean front, retaining the best bits, and supplementing with what one assumes is a selection from the now defunct Sea Fish restaurant, which was housed in the same block.

Hans also possesses a rather vibrant bar, liberally soused with parties of liberally soused regulars. We were gracefully seated by one of those remarkable "always there exactly when you want them:" waiters, who pushed in our chairs and hung up our coats. Menus and drinks arrived in next to no time, and those salient dining decisions were made.

Complimentary *kimshi* style tidbits were festooned around us: a selection of hot and savoury vegetable bits and a platter of fresh and slightly chewy calimari. The starters were swift arrivals to boot, the special fired vegetable being particularly delicious: patties of shredded capsicum, carrot, onion and cabbage, bound together in a savoury batter and lightly fried. The spring rolls tasted exactly as one would have expected them to. There's always something reassuring about a spring roll. No element of risk involved. We wolfed the toothsome twosome with some aplomb.

The main courses were no less of a delight. Hans has always been renowned amongst those in the know for its wonderful Bulgogi, or Korean BBQ as the menu would have it, and tonight's version lived up to its good name. The accompanying rice provided for a sticky moment or two, each grain clinging unctuously to its peers for grim death. Just, if I may opine, as it should be. The special crispy noodles were indeed a delight: very thin, very crunchy and very authentic, laced with a well spiced melee of vegetables. Vegetables of the season, no doubt.

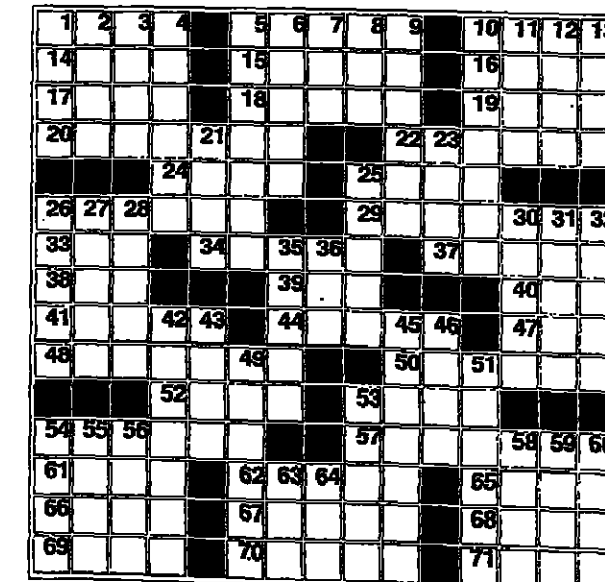
The third dish we elected for our delectation was fried shrimps with vegetables. The sizzling cow shaped platter of Bulgogi was depleting rapidly, as was the rice, and still no sign of those wiggly little crustaceans, flash fried, we were hoping, to within an inch of their deaths. We waited. We waited some more. We asked. We demurred. Perhaps a fortunate oversight, as when the platters we had were licked clean, we were both stuffed to the nines and ready to go pop. A surprise treat, and an economical one too. A hearty oriental feast with three cold Stellas rallied home at LE75. Hearty slaps on the back all round.

Hans Chinese and Korean, Baghdad Street, Near the Beirut Hotel, Korba, Heliopolis.

Al-Ahram Weekly

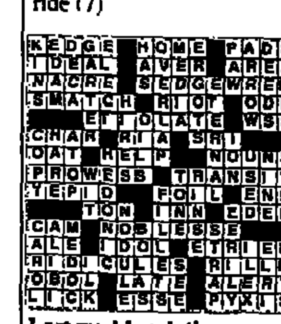
Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

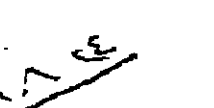


Across
1. Hard money (4)
5. Jots (4)
10. Formerly (4)
14. Eye admiringly (4)
15. A non-metallic element (5)
16. Carry (4)
17. Inflexible (4)
18. Natural cavities in bones (5)
19. Cause ship to lean over; low fellow (4)
20. Ship stranded on shallow water (7)
22. Pure 96)
24. Comb. form for "Indian" (4)
25. British WWII gun (4)
26. Japanese ancestor worship (6)
29. A metallic element used as acid, acetate, oxide, fluoride (7)
33. Humans (3)
34. Apron, jumbled (5)
37. Glissade; pass along (5)
38. Everyone (3)
39. suffer (3)
40. Be drowsy (5)
41. Shut-eye (5)
44. Wireless (5)
47. Spanish cheer (3)
48. Fervency; warmth (7)
50. Cannabis resin (6)
52. Soporific; blockhead (4)
53. Paint a miniature (4)
54. Calm; self controlled (6)
57. Trap (7)
61. Audit; check out (4)
62. ... and kicking (5)
65. The Green Isle (4)
66. Some skirts (4)
67. Mounts (5)
68. Assistant (4)
69. Suffix forming nouns and adjectives (4)
70. Witnesses; prophets (5)
71. Damsel (4)

Down.
1. Concluding passage in music (4)
2. Anticipatory (4)
3. Overlook; vilify; libel (4)
4. A highly addictive drug (6)
5. Forsake; disown, enthusiasm (7)
6. A circular painting or relief (5)
7. Leftovers (3)
8. Hums formed under acid conditions (3)
9. Grab; impound (7)
10. Alcohol (7)
11. Small deer (4)
12. Let it sand (4)
13. Comb. form for "far" (4)
21. Prep. of direction (4)
23. personal pronoun (4)
25. Burn (5)
26. Shatter (5)
27. Greeting (5)
28. Fjord; cove (5)
30. Young person (5)
31. Fantasies; apparitions (5)
32. Surrenders (5)
35. Analyse grammatically (5)
36. Long narrow inlet submerged in rover valley (3)
42. Local (7)
43. Slave; Spanish-American farm worker (4)
45. Frigidity (7)
46. Electrical units of resistance (4)
49. Piercing instruments (6)
51. Toughen (6)
53. Crowbar (5)
54. Prefix meaning :partly: (4)
55. Go out of (4)
56. Indian royal title (4)
58. Diva's forte (4)
59. Frees (4)
60. Weather directions (4)
63. Falsification; recline (3)
64. Orfe (3)



Last week's solution



Bureaucracy and the profit motive continue to eat away at Cairo's architectural heritage, but as Gihane Shahine finds out, some are fighting back

Princely gardens in the shade

Once again, a heated debate erupted over restoration plans for El-Manyal Palace Hotel, built on the unique gardens of Prince Mohamed Ali's palace. But President Mubarak this week settled the dispute

Behind the high, ancient gates of El-Manyal Palace life is divided. A visit to the palace itself does not necessarily offer a chance to enjoy the sights and scents of the lushest and most unique gardens in all of Egypt. The gardens are fenced off from the palace, which is now a museum. A hotel built on the grounds was closed down more than three years ago. The gardens are home to the rarest collection of plant species in the country and to some of its oldest living trees, several dating back to the Fatimid era. One 400-year-old tree stands almost in the middle of the gardens, a testimony to the antiquity of the place.

Plans to renovate and reopen the Manyal Hotel were revealed last week when the Egyptian Organisation for Tourism and Hotels (EGOTH), the state-owned company which owns the hotel and is affiliated to the Public Sector Ministry, announced that it was seriously considering six renovation offers from six foreign companies. The offers were reported to have reached the cabinet where a final decision will be made.

The news sparked controversy over the legal ownership of the historical site and arguments over its future. But President Hosni Mubarak intervened to end the dispute over the palace. He ordered the Ministry of Culture and its antiquities authorities to take over the palace and oversee its upkeep as a historic site. The government will take steps to have EGOTH give up the hotel. Chalets built in the gardens to serve as hotel rooms will be demolished.

Plans to restore the El-Manyal Palace Hotel were suggested three years ago, when EGOTH ended its contract with a French company that had run the hotel for 25 years, and reportedly wreaked havoc on the gardens. The plans, however, came to an abrupt halt after a campaign led by prominent poet and literary critic Farouk Guweida in the daily *Al-Ahram* opposing the idea. Atef Ebeid, the minister of the public sector, responded positively to Guweida's campaign at the time, announcing that no change whatsoever would be made to the gardens, since they were part and parcel of the historical palace of Prince Mohamed Ali, a son of Khedive Tawfik.

Yet, the results of Guweida's campaign were not totally successful. Despite the recent official announcement by Talaat Hammad, the minister of cabinet affairs, that the government would never allow any sort of encroachment or construction work to take place on green areas within the palace walls, and his demand that the company in charge of El-Manyal Palace Hotel make a record of all its rare plant species, plans to restore the hotel seemed to be well under way before Mubarak stepped in.

When the announcement was made last week that plans to renovate the El-Manyal Palace Hotel were once again under consideration, the media and many public officials launched an extensive campaign against the move. Guweida wrote in an article published in *Al-Ahram* that the very existence of a hotel on the grounds of Prince Mohamed Ali's palace is a "slaughter of history". He further claimed that EGOTH is not the legal owner of the place and thus its plans to renovate the hotel had no legal basis. His campaign seems to have finally paid off.

Prince Mohamed Ali built El-Manyal Palace in 1901. He chose the site, on the island of Roda, for its rare collection of plants and trees dating back to the Fatimid era. Prince Mohamed Ali further added to the collection, bringing some of the rarest species from around the world to the gardens. The palace, built in Islamic architectural style, together with a reception hall, named the "golden hall" for the golden Qur'anic and poetic inscriptions on its walls and ceilings, do not occupy more than two feddans out of a total area of 17 feddans, mostly devoted to the gardens.

The artistically-inclined prince was keen on turning his palace, where he received elite guests, politicians and intellectuals, into a living museum and a haven for art and artists. In 1908, Mohamed Ali registered the Manyal Palace as an antiquity. He devoted the annual revenue of some 2,213 feddans of his arable lands to the maintenance of the palace. Yet, the lands were later sequestrated after the 1952 Revolution.

But the palace itself was never sequestrated, being registered as an antiquity. In his will, Prince Mohamed Ali intended Manyal Palace and its gardens to be turned into a museum. His will is recorded on a plaque at the entrance of the palace.

Despite the prince's express wishes, 10 feddans of the palace's gardens were brought under the jurisdiction of the official Tourism Authority and its affiliated EGOTH company by a cabinet decree passed by Ali Sabri, then Egyptian prime minister, in 1965. In his article, Guweida claimed that Sabri's decision was made in favour of one of his relatives who happened to chair the Tourism Authority at the time.

EGOTH then rented off the gardens to a French company which established 220 two-storey wooden chalets on the land. Press reports claimed that the French company filled in a lake and cut down many old trees to provide the hotel with a swimming pool and a tennis court.

In 1984, then Prime Minister Fouad Mohieddin issued a decree stipulating that both the palace and its surroundings should be considered as antiquities. Yet, the French company did not vacate the premises until 1994, when EGOTH started looking for another company to take charge of the hotel.

"It is really disastrous to think that Prince Mohamed Ali was more keen to preserve our Islamic architectural heritage than we are," said Abdel-Halim Noureddin, ex-secretary-general of the Supreme Council for Antiquities, who strongly opposed plans to renovate El-Manyal Palace in 1994. "Building on El-Manyal Palace gardens is as silly as building a hotel attached to one of the Giza Pyramids to promote tourism. Tourism should not be promoted at the expense of the upkeep of antiquities."

Sabri Nashed, the head of the museums and exhibitions department of the Ministry of Culture, agreed. Even if the gardens were well-kept, their separation from the palace has largely spoilt the historic aura and significance of the place, he said.

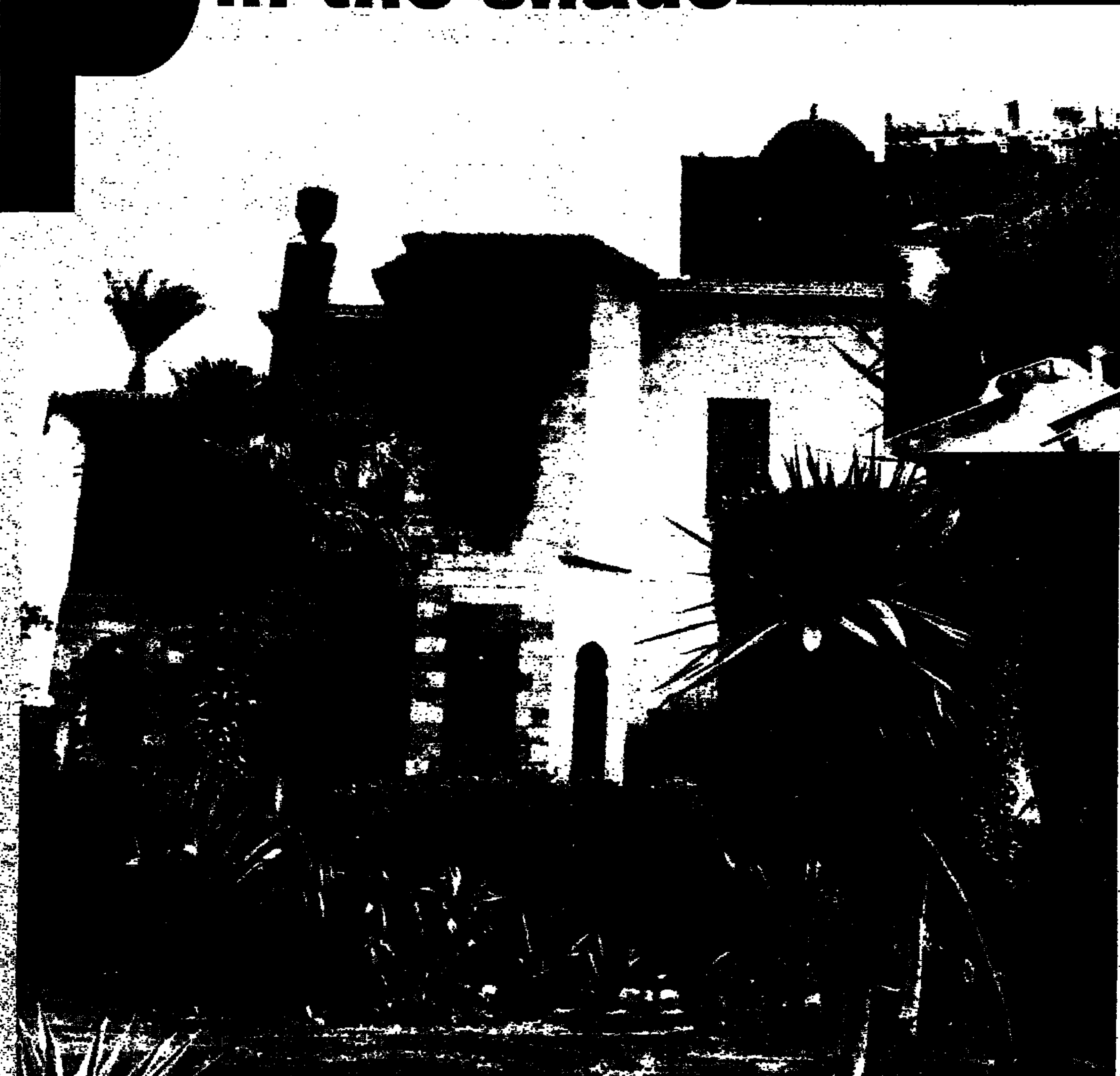
"The division of authority over the palace among the ministries of culture, the public sector and the Ministry of Tourism is largely to blame for what happened to El-Manyal Palace over the years," Nashed added.

Officials at the Supreme Council for Antiquities welcomed the presidential decision. They had always argued that both El-Manyal Palace and its gardens were registered as antiquities and were thus subject to Law 117 of 1983. "The law stipulates that no one has the right to make any change whatsoever to the place, and thus all plans to renovate the hotel should be rejected," said a spokesman for the secretary-general of the Supreme Council for Antiquities.

In response to Guweida's campaign, Atef Ebeid, the minister of the public sector, claimed that his ministry was very much aware of the significance of the El-Manyal gardens. Before Mubarak's decision, Ebeid voiced his approval of the renovation plans which he believed posed no threat to the garden's plant life. But, he also pointed out, the final go-ahead would depend on the approval of a special committee from the Supreme Council for Antiquities.

Prior to the presidential announcement, officials at EGOTH insisted they were taking good care of El-Manyal gardens. According to Ali El-Embabi, EGOTH chairman, his company spends about LE20,000 a month on the preservation of the gardens. He added that contracts had been signed with the same company that tended the gardens of the presidential palaces, plus three agricultural experts and a care-service company to look after the gardens. Every single plant, rare or not, is documented in a file kept at the company.

Their suggested plans did not go beyond changing the chalets' façades, to bring them in line with the Islamic architectural style of the palace. They assured that no infrastructural changes, which could cause damage to the gardens, were included.



photos: Randa Shaath

El-Manyal Palace stands amidst gardens which are home to some of the rarest species of plants and trees in Egypt

Once an oasis

Heliopolis, built around the turn of the century as an oasis of good living, has been overtaken by Cairo's urban jungle. Lately, the Heliopolis Development Association, a non-profit organisation working under the patronage of Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, began implementing a project aimed at reversing the ravages of uncontrolled urban growth



Modern shop fronts encroach on traditional architecture in Heliopolis

Classy? Beautiful? Serene? Green? Such words may have described Heliopolis, or *Masr El-Gadida*, at the turn of the century, or even two decades ago, but today it's a different story.

"Walking through the streets of Heliopolis when I first moved here was like strolling the streets of Europe," said 80-year-old Mounira El-Shourbagy, who went to live with her daughter in Heliopolis 30 years ago. El-Shourbagy's eyes twinkle as she remembers the old days when "cars hardly ever passed by our house, the tree-lined streets were almost empty, houses and villas had the aura of aristocracy, the tram, which was the only means of transport linking Heliopolis to downtown, was comfortable and fast, and most families enjoyed their weekends in the beautiful Merryland gardens." Unlike today, living in Heliopolis "was more like living in a totally different part of Cairo," said El-Shourbagy.

"Different" is what Heliopolis, a sprawling district 10 kilometres north-east of the Cairo centre, was meant to be. *Masr El-Gadida* was the brainchild of the Belgian banker and entrepreneur Baron Edouard Empain who won the patronage of the most influential members of the Turkish, British and other foreign communities in Egypt at the time.

Under the umbrella of the Cairo Electric Railway and Heliopolis Oasis Company, Baron Empain envisioned the creation of a self-contained, cosmopolitan "Garden City" with large areas of greenery and low population density. Work began in 1905. Strict building criteria had to be followed: buildings were not allowed to exceed a certain height and the company was only allowed to build on one sixth of the allocated area, although this was increased to one fourth in 1907.

The new city followed a mixture of European and Islamic architectural styles. "European-style, tree-lined boulevards and squares were modelled on those of Paris or Brussels," said Ibrahim El-Demeery, dean of the Ain Shams Faculty of Engineering and a member of the Heliopolis Development Association.

But the Heliopolis Oasis Company wanted to include distinctly Islamic aspects, characterised by the domes, minarets, and the extensive use of arches which featured throughout the city.

The number of inhabitants of Heliopolis rose from 1,000 in 1910 to 50,000 in 1947. One metro and two tram lines, also built by the Heliopolis Oasis Company, had begun running since 1906.

Heliopolis also had its own cinema, the Roxy, and other attractions such as the funfair Luna Park.

Baron Empain, however, would probably be shocked to see Heliopolis as it is today. Urban expansions have gradually swallowed many green areas. Originally designed to have large expanses of green, open space, Heliopolis now has only 4.7 square metres of greenery per person compared to the international standard of 11 square metres.

"Eclectic" is perhaps how Baron Empain would describe Heliopolis' present architecture. El-Shourbagy, who "used to have a wonderful time shopping in El-Korba and Roxy, pacing up and down the sidewalks under the shadow of the arches," would certainly get lost strolling the same streets today. Cement blocks stand next to beautiful, old art deco edifices, as if in wild competition between the past and the present, and new apartment blocks are often painted shocking, glaring colours. In front of El-Shourbagy's home, for example, stands a new, multi-coloured eyesore, featuring shades of black, orange, yellow, red and white.

"It is really shocking to see how the new generation [of architects] lacks any aesthetic sense," El-Shourbagy laments. "Even restoration work is done without any appreciation of the original beauty. Architects tend to use gaudy colours that do not match the old age of the edifice restored. Some residents make adjustments to the façade of their apartments using colours which differ from those around, thus ruining the harmony of the whole building."

Many buildings are left in the throes of negligence, which has taken its toll on their facades. The harmony is ruined by the random installation of air-conditioners on their outside walls, the encirclement of balconies with metal windows to create more room for the household and the incompatible modern decoration of shop-windows and façades.

This change in Heliopolis dates back to the Nasser era, according to urban historians. The late President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's priority was to provide housing for low-income families, a policy which was pursued often at the expense of preserving architectural beauty. With the late President Anwar Sadat's open-door policy and the rise of a new class of *nouveaux riches* and entrepreneurs, a large number of old palaces and villas were destroyed and high-rise buildings were erected in their place.

The Belgian company which had built Heliopolis was also nationalised and, as many architects put it, the state-run company shot itself in the foot when it started to care more for fast profit than for following a well-defined architectural and building code.

The Heliopolis Development Association, working under the patronage of Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, decided to try and do something about the deterioration of the district. Mrs Mubarak presided over a meeting of the Association's Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Heritage, and a project was launched to develop the district, as well as preserve and restore its old beauty.

The association met with residents, architects, businessmen and social activists to discuss the project.

"The budget was the main obstacle to the plan," El-Demeery said. "It was decided that we should depend on donations from individual residents and shop owners living in Heliopolis."

And the public have shown readiness to pay, according to El-Demeery. The association has collected LE550,000 so far. A private cable company has offered to refurbish the old architectural style of the apartment block it occupies in El-Korba. A group of local women will also visit the residents of old apartment blocks to increase public awareness of the importance of the preservation of Heliopolis' architectural heritage.

Public authorities have similarly shown a willingness to contribute to the project. The public General Authority for Promotion of Tourism promised to donate LE1 million for resolving traffic problems in the area. The Cairo Governorate will take charge of increasing green areas, improving garbage collection and supervising the cleaning work.

The plan will be implemented in four stages. It will start with the refurbishment of the façades of buildings overlooking the main streets running from Roxy Square to the Thawra and Orouba intersection, through the district of El-Korba. The second stage will be a survey of the urban areas surrounding El-Korba and Roxy. The third will cover El-Merghany Street in the west, reaching to El-Orouba Street in the east. The fourth will focus on the area running from Beirut Street in the south to Abu Bakr Al-Seddiq Street in the north.

Architects are collecting old photos of the original architecture to help them in their restoration work. Meanwhile, the Cairo Governorate will be paving roads, re-planning a number of crossroads in the area and removing unsightly billboards. A map will be drawn for the whole district of Heliopolis, showing the location of car parking lots, public utilities, green and developed areas and marking the style of architecture in the different places. The Committee of Architectural Heritage Preservation also recommends that a building code be drawn and strictly imposed on further urban expansions in Heliopolis.

The plan has already been put into effect, starting with the district of El-Korba. The re-paving of roads and pedestrian sidewalks is well under way and many billboards have been removed.

Some people claim that other less privileged areas are more deserving. But El-Demeery argues that the project could inspire town planners working in other parts of the country. "The project will just be an example for what can be done elsewhere. And, after all, the funds came from the pockets of the residents of Heliopolis."

Ancient life exquisitely detailed in newly-discovered tomb

This week the discovery of a tomb of an Old Kingdom official containing some of the most exquisite-coloured reliefs ever found at Saqqara was announced. Jill Kamil visited the site during excavations, and Nevine El-Aref talked to officials

The tomb of Meref Neb-ef, grand vizier in the reign of King Teti who ruled during the 6th Dynasty (2345-2181 BC), has been discovered by a Polish-Egyptian mission who have been working at Saqqara since the autumn of 1996. Zahi Hawass, director-general of the Giza necropolis, describes it as "housing some of the best examples of art from that era," and Gaballa Gaballa, the new secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), commented specifically on a unique representation of geese eating seeds, "the likes of which have previously appeared only once, in the famous Meidum geese painting now in the Egyptian Museum."

The coloured wall reliefs, which have been treated for protection, are indeed remarkable. Meref Neb-ef, whose name means "the one who loves his master", held many titles. All inscribed on the facade of his tomb, they range from vizier and supreme judge, to guardian of the king's secrets and guard of the house of Anubis, the god associated with mummification. "The burial chamber was smoothed with a layer of plaster to facilitate the finely detailed work of the artists," said Hawass, who commented also on the exquisite detail of the reliefs and the remarkable condition of the paint.

Prof Mysliwiec on site

Representations of the owner of the tomb accompanied by his wife stand on both sides of the central doorway and, for a small tomb, a remarkable number of activities are portrayed: scenes of court life, with entertainment by harpists and dancers; scenes of the owner supervising agricultural activities, overseeing the baking of bread and production of beer, as well as hunting scenes.

Even more noteworthy is the delicate way in which every detail is painted, from the feathers of the geese to the details of basket-weave in a tiny hieroglyphic symbol.

The site of the new discovery lies to the west of the Step Pyramid of Zoser, just south of the small but magnificently decorated tomb of Ptah-hotep. "It was unthinkable that the area lying to the west of Zoser's Pyramid complex should not be an integral part of the whole cemetery," said Prof Karol Mysliwiec of the Polish Academy of Scientific Research when he was first attracted to the area. "After all, from the beginning of ancient history to the end, it was the area regarded as the gateway to the afterlife and the site where important officials were buried."

And so in 1987, his interest fired up, a Polish mission led by Mysliwiec and with a geophysical team in tow, "decided to dig three trial-pits within the area extending from the southern border of Zoser's enclosure westwards as far as the top of a sandy hill to the west, and the *ghafir*'s (guards) abode to the north."

Mysliwiec then went on to describe with growing excitement that the trial pits "revealed that the area had indeed been used as a necropolis; and not only in the Old Kingdom. There was evidence that it was used from the early dynasties right through to the Roman and Byzantine periods," he said.

"A section of an ancient wall running north-south parallel to the west side of Zoser's pyramid was typical of the second and third dynasties; second dynasty pottery and faience tiles (typical of the third dynasty) were found; and then, at the other end of the scale, was an anthropoid coffin typical of the early Ptolemaic period. We also found 10 shafts with skeletons from the same Graeco-Roman period with traces of offerings. There was every indication that it was a ritual place for some 50 or 60 years," Mysliwiec went on, "and raised the possibility that the early site, long buried, may have retained its sanctity and become fashionable in Greek times."

At this point, when everything was pointing to a discovery of not inconsiderable interest and importance, there was a nine-year delay.

"It was decreed by the antiquities department that storehouses had to be built at every archaeological site to house any artifacts discovered, and while this was reasonable enough, it was beyond the means of the Polish mission. "We closed the site and only returned in 1996, having made arrangements for a joint Polish-Egyptian mission to proceed, with permission to use the facilities of the Saqqara Inspectorate to house the objects unearthed," said Mysliwiec.

Work started once more. With painstaking attention to detail, walls were excavated, and different phases of occupation identified. Shafts were discovered and cleared. "But archaeology is never smooth sailing. There are always surprises," said Mysliwiec. "Just when you come across evidence that seems certain to confirm your hypothesis, you're faced with something else that makes you change your mind." He was referring to the discovery of a 6th Dynasty lintel bearing the name of Meref Neb-ef, and the discovery of the unique tomb mentioned above.

Restoration has proved to be a very delicate process as, unlike many other tombs at Saqqara, the reliefs are not carved on quality limestone and painted, but fashioned in plaster and are extremely fragile. In-depth study has revealed that the tomb was never finished, "and there is some indication of sibling rivalry," said Mysliwiec. "Evidence of what actually transpired in those ancient times may lie around the corner, as restoration continues; on the other hand, it may elude us as effectively as the truth of why Tutankhamun was buried in such a hurry. That's all part of the excitement."

Gaballa assured that "the tomb should soon be open to the public," adding that "the Polish mission will continue to excavate in the same area where part of another, 2nd Dynasty tomb, has been identified."





The exquiste reliefs are being restored; that of Meref Neb-ef and his wife at the entrance to the tomb are among the finest *photos: Michael Stock*

Site tours

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.

Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman.
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32

Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North/South Sinai
Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Quseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410.

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Egyptian tourism on the Internet

Here are some useful addresses on the Internet, including tourism magazines, archaeology and travel agency programmes:

http:// www.idsc.gov.eg/links.htm is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the Internet. Here they are:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/tourism is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions.

Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of the nation's Information Highway.

http://163.121.10.41/tourism is the key to Egypt Has It All, where Egypt's tourist sites, such as the Red Sea, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, the Sinai, Alexandria, oases and ETA offices abroad are described. The magazine also contains colour photographs of Egypt.

http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes their projects in Egypt.

http://www-ceg.ceg.vivc.edu/~haggag/travel.html is the address of Egypt's Tours and Travel, which organises packages for people who want to take quality tours. It is an Egyptian tour operator, which specialises in tours within Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East.

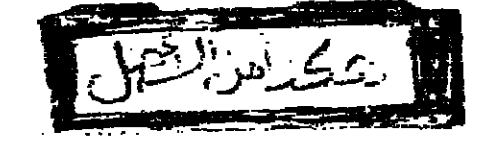
http://www.geocitles.com/TheTropics/7210 is the address of The Curse of the Pharaohs. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.

http://www.ezy.be/horses is the address of The Arabian Horse Worldwide Guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and versatile horse — the Arabian.

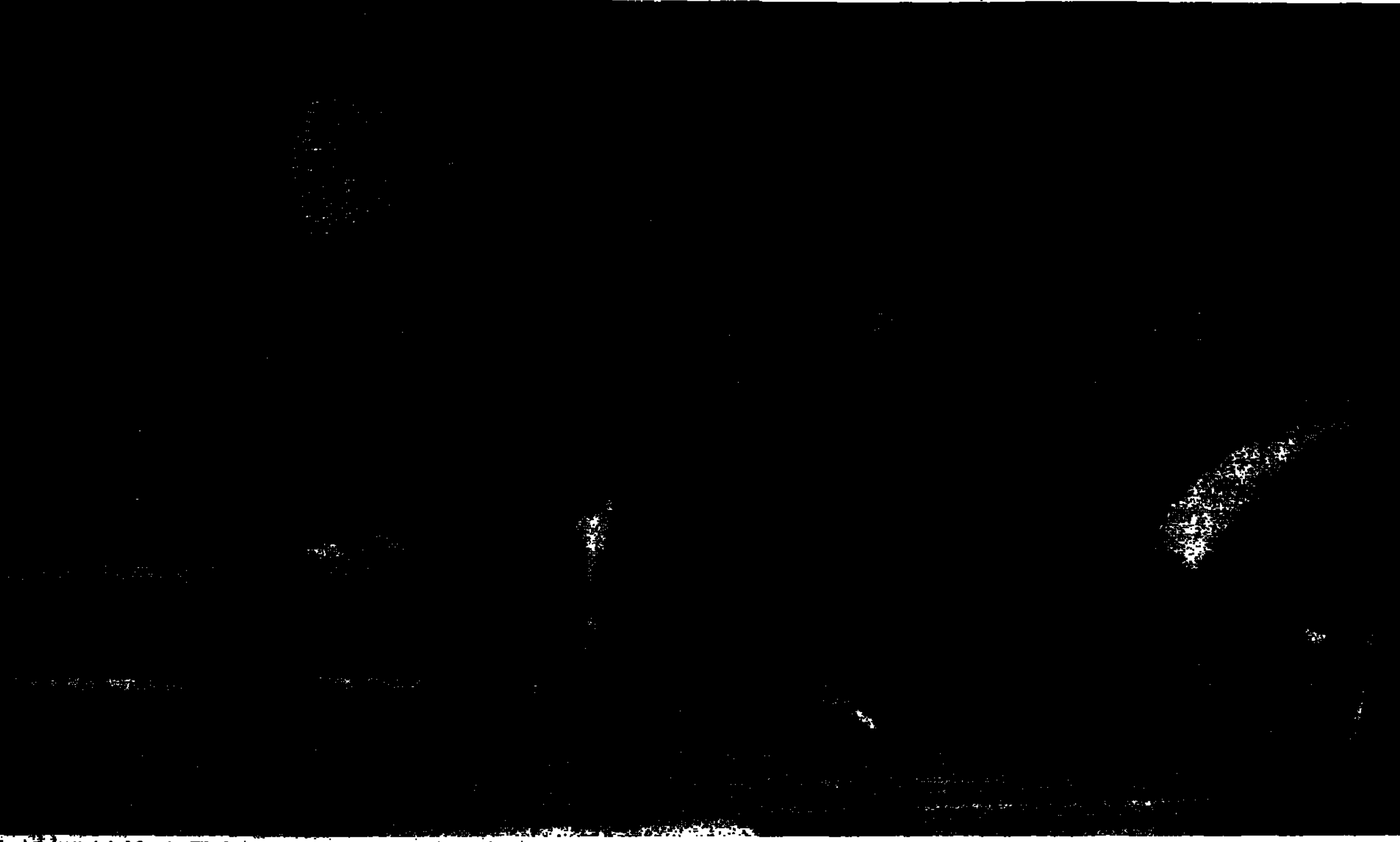
http://intercoz.com/egypt is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist sites are listed and described.

http://www.datum.com.eg/~city is the address of the magazine *Cairo Scene*, Cairo's first on-line art and entertainment guide. It is the most up-to-date source on where to go and what to do in Cairo. It has also sections for books and the latest CDs besides proposed places to visit like Wadi Rayan.

http://wan.seas.virginia.edu/~aoa5v is the site of Exodus Egypt, a daily site covering home news including political, social and cultural events.







Egyptians training for the World Championship

photo: Amr Gamal

Bowled over

President Hosni Mubarak seemed to enjoy inaugurating the AMF World Bowling Championship last Saturday at the International Bowling Centre that has been constructed especially for the occasion. **Eman Abdel-Moeti** watched the pins drop

The president of Egypt and Mrs Suzanne Mubarak attended the opening of the 32nd AMF World Bowling Championship which is being held from 15 to 22 November at the International Bowling Centre in Nasr City, Cairo. This is the first time that Egypt has hosted such a competition, and with an unprecedented number of entries (155 players from 85 countries) and a budget of LE1.4 million to match, the organisers are determined to make it a resounding success. Also present at the opening ceremony were Prime Minister Dr Kamal El-Ganzouri, who is acting as guardian angel to the championship, Defence Minister *Hussein Tantawi* and *President of the* World Bowling Federation Gerald Gebbins, Executive Manager of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS) Abdel-Moneim Emara, and President of the Egyptian Bowling Federation Hanafi Riad.

Thanks to the combined efforts of the ministries of defence and tourism and the SCYS, the opening night was a spectacular event in itself. The eminent Egyptian actor Omar El-Sherif presented the military orchestra which followed the national anthem. Then players paraded to the accompaniment of bagpipes played by the national dance group dressed in Pharaonic costume.

Before the party got properly under way, Egypt's Heba Atef and one of the international referees together said the players' oath. Then the entertainment got under way with Egypt's most famous pop singers, Anushka and Mohamed Munir, joining together to sing: "You're a great country".

President of the Egyptian Bowling Federation Hanafi Riad said that sport has always been a means of spreading peace among nations. This is why Egypt's role in hosting and organising world tournaments in recent years has grown to such an extent. Under this influence, Egyptians have begun to take an interest *in many sports other than football*. The president of the World Bowling Federation expressed his delight that Egypt, with its ancient and magnificent civilisation, should host *an event of such moment for bowling fans* everywhere. He pointed out that the president's attendance at the opening ceremony was in itself a magnificent gesture of support for the sport, and that none of this would have been possible had it not been for the president's interest and attention.

Cairo currently has six bowling centres, but the newly-constructed International Bowling Centre in Nasr City is the biggest of them all, with 23 lanes. When an AMF representative came to inspect the International Centre two weeks ago, he was apparently amazed by the state-of-the-art equipment and the capacity of the stands that can hold up to 1,500 spectators. The organising committee of the tournament has agreed that bowling fans should be allowed to attend the matches free of charge.

The 155 men and women competitors embarked upon the long struggle for the World Cup last Sunday. There were three rounds of eight games spread over three days, for which participants have been divided into two groups. The 24 contenders with the highest number of points across both groups then went on to play two rounds of eight games that will be held today (Thursday). Of these, the best eight men and eight women will compete *again tomorrow (Friday). The last three* will play in a "stepladder" final that is to be held in the shadow of the Pyramids.

Head of the organising committee Amr *Kamel said: "We thought that holding the fi*nals in the open air on the Pyramids Plateau would be a great incentive for the players and encourage them to fight their way to the top." It will certainly make for a uniquely special event.

Ten-pin bowling is often thought of as the easiest sport in the world. All the player has to do is knock down as many pins as possible in two attempts with the aid of a heavy ball. However, one of the hardest things in the world is to score a game of ten-pin bowling. A game consists of ten frames, and for each frame the player can make two attempts. If on his first attempt, he knocks down less than ten pins, then he has a second attempt. If the total for the frame is less than ten, then he scores that number of points. *If it is ten, then that is a* "spare", and he scores ten plus the number of pins he knocks over with the first throw of the next frame. If he knocks down all ten pins in one go, that is a "strike". For a strike, he earns ten points, plus the total number of points from the next two throws — unless his next throw is another strike: in that case, it is called a "double", and the player earns, for the first strike, ten plus ten (from the second strike) plus the number of pins he knocks down with the first throw of the frame following; and for *the second strike, ten points, plus all the* points from the frame that follows. Unless, of course, the third frame is a strike too... You get the gist. To play, all you need is a good eye and a firm wrist. To keep the score, you need a PhD in pure mathematics. Some of the Egyptian entrants told the *Weekly* that it had taken them three years to get used to this abstruse system devised to give the very best players an extravagant advantage over the rest.

Right now, the countries that lead the world in bowling are the USA, which has won the World Championship 11 times, the Philippines (six times), and Canada (five times). Previous champions Lucy Giovinco of the USA and Mohamed El-Qubaisi of the United Arab Emirates are among this year's participants.

Egypt will be represented by Heba Atef and Mohamed Ibrahim, who have been coached *intensively by the Swedish coach* Joseph Vener over the past four months.

An early qualification

FOLLOWING a 2-0 victory over Kazema of Kuwait, Ahli secured a place in the semi-finals of the Arab League Champions' Cup, regardless of the result of yesterday's match against Tunisia's Safakes — *the last match of the* qualifying round.

With this victory, Ahli brought its total score to 6 points from two *matches, to go top of its group.* The result of yesterday's match can now only determine who is finally placed first and who second, between the Egyptian and the Tunisian team. Safakes also has six points, after defeating Palestine's El-Amaary 4-0. However, the Egyptians lead on goal differences.

Ahli started the tournament very powerfully with a significant 7-0 victory over El-Amaary, in a one-sided game completely dominated by the Egyptians.

Kazema, who had a disappointing start when they were defeated 3-0 by Safakes *in their* first match of the 10-day tournament, now have no hope of reaching the semis, and nor do the Palestinians.

There are eight teams competing in the tournament which started last Friday. They are divided into two groups, four *teams in* each. To the surprise of the guests and participants, the opening ceremony witnessed a peculiarly low turnout, with only 75 spectators having troubled to turn up at the 60,000-seater stadium. TV viewers thought the tournament has not yet begun and that what they were watching was no more than a training session. Only when the teams paraded onto the pitch and a group of boys and girls began a dance to welcome them, did viewers realise that this was indeed the opening ceremony.

In the first group, Algeria's Telmesani team overpowered Wehdat of Jordan 7-0, and Tunisia's Club Africain beat Ahli of Saudi Arabia 3-1. Telmesani of Algeria is top of the group with four points, with Africain, and both are ahead of their hosts on goal difference. Ahli Jeddah is lying third with 3 points, while Wehdat is languishing at the bottom.

(AP and AFP)

Egypt went all the way to Malaysia to take fourth place in the World Squash Teams Championship. Our reporter observes the trials and tribulations of three young men a long long way from home



Omar El-Brollossy against Brett Martin of Australia

Photo: Amr Gamal

Tournaments with tigers

It certainly makes a lot of difference to players whether they are playing in their home town before a crowd of cheering *fans or in some strange* distant place abroad. The Egyptian players who distinguished themselves in the World Squash Team Championship here in Cairo back in 1995 definitely missed their *fans this year when they* found themselves all alone on the courts of Malaysia, writes **Eman Abdel-Moeti**.

In the individuals event, only Ahmed Barada and Amir Wagih *played, while* Omar El-Brollossy sat this one out. Unfortunately, Wagih was defeated 3-0 in his first match in the first round by Rodney Eyles of Australia, the world number two. Eyles, *who has often lost in the past* to Ahmed Barada, took his revenge on Wagih. Eyles was determined from the very beginning of the tournament that he would go all the way to the top — and he did, winning all *his matches*. He even beat Scotland's Peter Nicol who is widely considered the person most likely to succeed Jansher Khan as the world's leading professional squash player.

Barada, on the other hand, went *on to* beat Tony Hands of England 3-1, then Hands' fellow countryman Mark Chaloner 3-0. But he was blown out of the water by the new Scottish squash rocket, Peter Nicol, the world number *three, who* beat Jansher Khan in the final of the Al-Ahram Open a few months ago. This time Nicol beat Barada 3-2, scoring 9-15, 14-15, 15-7, 15-13, 15-3.

Overcoming the Egyptian *obstacle was not* only a great incentive for Eyles to keep on winning, but also helped the Australian team who were playing with Egypt, Finland, and Wales in Group B to come out victorious. If they did not take the World Teams title, then at least they were able to defeat the Egyptian team who had beaten them to a place in the first three in the 1995 World Championship.

On the morning of the teams event, Wales, Australia, and England objected to the order of the Egyptian team, which placed Brollossy before Wagih when Wagih precedes Brollossy in the latest world rankings issued on 1 November. However, the Egyptian delegation headed by Hossam Nasser, president of the Egyptian Squash Federation, argued that Brollossy had always preceded Wagih in world ranking until the most recent standings which do not reflect a true change in performance. They also said that Brollossy's performance had improved remarkably in the Professional Squash Association tournaments this year, more than that of Wagih, and his younger age and general standard give him the advantage over his team mate. They finished by observing that the difference in ranking between both players was only two places. Thus the order of the Egyptian team was adopted as proposed: Ahmed Barada, Omar El-Brollossy, Amir Wagih, with Amr Shabana as substitute.

The team's first match against Wales was not as easy as some had expected. Ahmed Safwat, the Egyptian coach, said: "Everybody thought our first games against Wales would be easy, but they weren't because the Welsh team had a very strong player, Alex Gough, who reached the semi-finals in the individual event." Although Barada managed to beat Gough in the first two games and came close to winning the decisive third one, Gough managed to stage a comeback. Barada went on to win, thanks to Ahmed Safwat's sound advice between games. Egypt finally defeated Wales 2-1 after Brollossy beat David Evans, though Wagih lost to Gareth Davis.

The second match was against Finland, and Egypt again won 2-1. Their first upset came with a 3-0 defeat by the Australian team. Unfortunately, this time Barada failed to defeat Eyles, losing 9-7, 9-4, 2-9, 9-6. Craig Rowland defeated Wagih 10-9, 0-9, 2-9, 9-5, 9-1, and Dan Jenson lost to Brollossy 9-5, 9-3.

Having qualified for the quarter-finals, Egypt managed to beat Pakistan, but then they ran into Australia again in the semifinal where, once again, they lost to their rivals. So this year it was Egypt who came fourth place and Australia who came third.

Canada, England — the defending champions— and Pakistan all made it to the quarter-finals from Pool A, even though the Canadians managed to beat England in the first round.

It was a historic win, as the Canadians have never before beaten England in a tournament. The Canadians Jonathon Power, Graham Ryding, and Gary Waite, literally leapt for joy when they realised they had won. Canada were ranked sixth at the last World Championships, but now they are ranked second. They lost to England in the final, and the Brits are now celebrating their second world title in a row.

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

Waiting for Mike?

EVANDER Holyfield, who had said boxing had nothing left to offer him after a possible unification bout with Lennox Lewis, now hints he might hang around to meet Mike Tyson again. Holyfield spoke of retirement last week, before defeating Michael Moorer for the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation heavyweight titles. Holyfield also said he almost certainly would not fight the man who bit a chunk of his ear off last June. Tyson's ploy led to his being banned from boxing for at least a year.

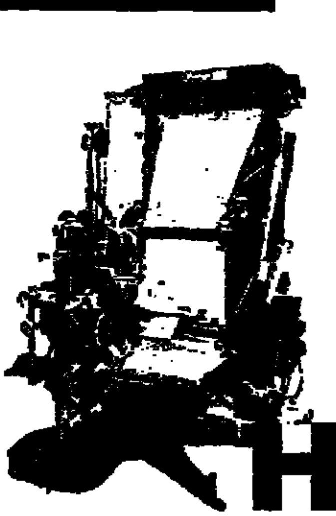
Holyfield thanked his family, his coaches and his lawyer as Atlanta celebrated his victory over Michael Moorer. A gospel group and a high school cheerleading squad joined about 200 supporters who applauded the heavyweight champion during a brief ceremony at City Hall. Mayor Bill Campbell, fighting for his political life in a runoff election, praised Holyfield as a model citizen and ambassador for the city and state. "He's a man who has fought for children, fought for family and fought for God, a true champion for people everywhere," Campbell said.

Al-Ahram Weekly

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Mohamed Atiya Ibrahim:

The man and the machine



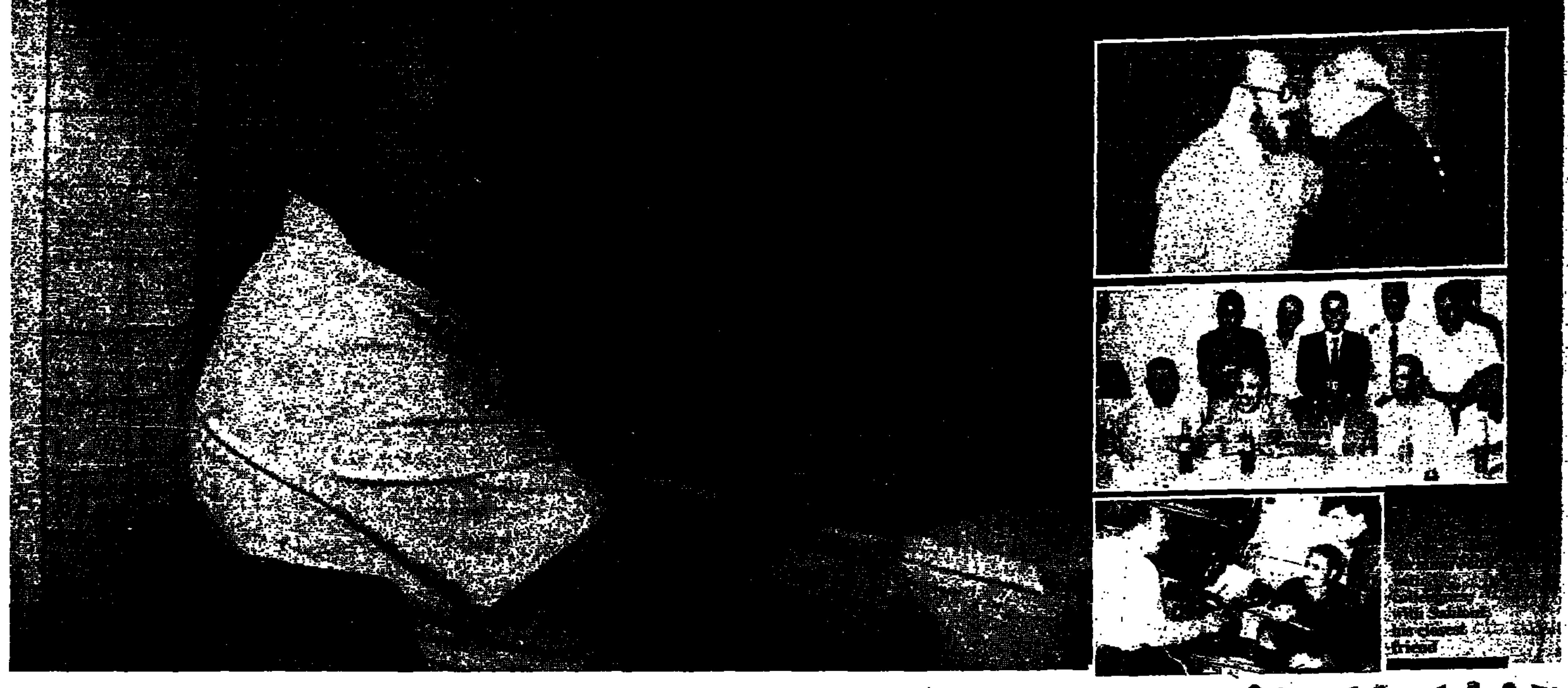


photo: Randa Shaath

Hot metal, cold print

To this day, his excitement about the Lithotype and Intertype letter-setting machines has not subsided. He was enchanted by the sight of the keyboard, and the movement of the yellow lead-mold matrices, the letters descending one after the other twenty eight times as they revolved in the machine after hot lead had been poured into the types to form lead lines read upside down. His eyes rapturously followed the remaining stages of the printing process, until, finally, a legible printed line was born.

At 58, Mohamed Atiya Ibrahim is the veteran Intertype worker at the Al-Ahram printshop. Like all workers who grow enamoured of their machines, Ibrahim cannot imagine things being any different. He has spent long hours watching the huge machine at work, its playful letters falling in one after the other to form words and lines. To him, it is still an outstanding machine; certainly, he who operated it was no ordinary worker.

During his 40 years in the Al-Ahram printshop, Ibrahim was a first-hand witness of the development of printing from its most elementary beginnings to the sophisticated modern techniques. His life experience bridged the gap from letter composition with the lead-mold matrices to perforation and punching tapes, to photo composition with cut-out letter types. Ibrahim had to adjust rapidly to changes in the workplace itself. He could experience nostalgia for the smell of melted lead, the heat of the foundry, the stores of copper. He remembers the days when it was commonplace to see workers in their blue overalls holding bottles of milk to their mouths, gulping the white liquid, as a preventive medicine dispensed by the firm against lead-related diseases. "Lead was our key enemy. We breathed the gases released by the lead-based alloy, known to leave toxic deposits affecting human bones."

All this is now gone forever. The workplace is a combination of carpeted floors and air-conditioned halls, where computers are operated by highly skilled employees, gaze fixed on the screen. Words and lines come and go in response to light touches; these lines are the compositions of news items, features and articles to be reproduced in print. Of the 170 who once worked on the lead-operated machines, only 10 remain today. "We feel that we are one family, sharing each other's joy and grief."

Ibrahim also remembers the day he came from his village, Mashtoul Al-Souq, in the governorate of Sharqiya, to settle in Heliopolis. He had just obtained his primary school certificate. He loves to talk about his enchantment with the printing machine, and his diligence and speed in learning everything there was to know about its operation, cleaning and maintenance.

"It was fate which guided my steps to Al-Ahram. I was tested for the job by a tight-lipped Italian engineer, whom I greatly respected and whose love of the work and awe of the printing machines was near adoration. Mr Darigo lived across the street from work.

"I loved Mr Darigo. I was interested in the work and gave it all my energy. I did my best to excel, I did the molds, the frames for budgets, tables and figures in record time, work which only a master printer could do. Today, similar graphics are printed on the computer in less than no time!"

He was responsible for the letter-setting composition of important articles by such prominent writers as Tewfik El-Hakim, Naguib Mahfouz, Louis Awad, Youssef Idris and Hussein Fawzi. "The weekly article by Mohamed Hassanein Heikal in the '60s, when he was editor-in-chief, was my special assignment. His handwriting is small, very characteristic and not very legible. I did my best to produce his articles free from any printing errors. He was known for his strictness and intolerance of errors. His weekly article was kept strictly confidential until it appeared in print. He himself took his work with the utmost seriousness, and was extremely demanding of himself before being demanding of others." The typeset used for Heikal's articles reflected the writer's concern for form as well as content. He himself indicated the size of the fronts he desired, and his articles were characterised by harmony of the font sizes, specifically 9,12 and 18. So letter-setting his articles by hand, at the time, was no easy matter.

As Ibrahim was promoted, he was entrusted with more responsibilities as a supervisor, yet he consistently refused to give up his work at the printing machine. "I am bound to the machine by a profound love and admiration for which I cannot find words to express. The machine has been the source of my livelihood. Very often I would speak to the machine, ask her to do certain things, and she would immediately respond. It was indeed an inexplicable relation, profound affection and friendship." A faithful man, he refused to replace this companion, and used the same machine for 30 years. Often he coaxed and cajoled it, saying, "You won't let me down today!" His soft monologue continued, virtually uninterrupted, for the ten hours he spent at its side. For 40 years, he stood there as the letters fell into place, composing the stories that never stopped coming in: the war in Yemen, the Arab-Israeli conflicts and negotiations... the lead matrices kept moving. Ibrahim found out what was happening in the world long before the first papers, still hot from the press, were delivered to their morning readers.

"Unfortunately, I lived to see my beloved Intertype dismissed as old-fashioned, its place taken by new printers. For everyone but me, the replacement of one machine by a new one is a banality. The steam engine put an end to the age of horse treks, and motor cars won the battle with carriages."

Tenaciously attached to his machine, he inquired whether it would not be possible to salvage it by introducing repairs or modifications. But the cold answer was that the heyday of the hot metal system had passed everywhere, and that the cold printing system had arrived. Since printing machines are imported, not produced in Egypt, it became evident that only new machines could be purchased on the market. The British companies which had produced the Lithotype and Intertype printers had been sold to American companies.

"I had to come to terms with reality. I had to learn that things were changing rapidly, technology was moving forward at the speed of light, pervading all fields of human activity. One either had to move forward, to keep pace with developments by learning and accommodating the new, or be happy to be left behind. Failure to move forwards means regression."

At Al-Ahram, Ibrahim lived through all the stages involved in the development of printing. State-of-the-art technology was introduced by Al-Ahram as it appeared in the US and on Fleet Street. In fact, Al-Ahram preceded Fleet Street in introducing cold printing technology, which was delayed in Britain due to the staunch objection by the British printers' union.

The old Al-Ahram premises on Sherif Street, in the heart of Cairo, are especially dear to him. He spent 29 years there. Today, huge bulldozers are tearing it down. The entrance to the old building was from Al-Sherifein Street, not much more than an alley, really, on which the old premises of the Egyptian Broadcasting Corporation stood. Just behind the entrance was the clock at which a clerk checked the arrival and departure of employees who were punching in or out. Just behind the first gate was a second small door, to the left of which stood an iron fence. Set in the middle was a door with a sign: Mechanical Composition. The door gave onto a room which houesd 13 Intertype machines, made in England in 1919.

The first development in printing machinery focused on the keyboard. The Arabic keyboard the printers used consisted of 120 characters representing the different forms of letters, depending on whether a letter fell at the beginning, middle or end of a word. The developed keyboard consisted of only 90 characters.

When Al-Ahram was moved to the new premises on Galaa Street, the printshop held 26 machines, six of which used perforated tape. For the first time, the printers used the Justape computer printer, which combined the old technology with a new high-speed machine. TTS machines were also introduced, allowing mechanical composition. Only one superintendent was needed to control six machines. The old printing machines were already on their way to the flea market when it dawned on an official that they had historical value. They were therefore saved, and are today kept as museum pieces next to the high-tech printing equipment in the recently launched Al-Ahram printshop in 6 October City.

At the new Al-Ahram building, Ibrahim met kings, heads of state and public figures visiting the premises. Among the visitors were Nasser, Sadat, King Hussein of Jordan, Umm Kulthoum and others. US Secretary of State Rogers toured the premises with Heikal and visited the printers in the composition and editing departments.

Although his formal education never extended beyond the old primary school certificate, he is an avid reader of great works, and has become something of a political analyst through his work at the paper. He is always after news and knowledge. His knowledge of Arabic grammar is excellent, and he often detects and corrects grammatical errors in the work of top editors. He feels he is a journalist, "even if I come at the very tail of the white collar line".

Not that Ibrahim feels that a journalist's work is any better than a printer's. "You have no idea how happy I felt when I used to see people on the bus every morning reading the words I had set with my own hands. I was filled with pride, even if the name of the writer of the article appeared in the middle of the page, because I had made that page."

His dismay at discovering errors after printing was proportional to this pride. "It ruined my day. Printing errors are numerous during the process of mechanical lead composition. When an error occurred in a 28-letter line, we had to repeat the composition of the line, but sometimes we would correct one letter and make a mistake in another line."

Some of the resulting bloopers are anything but amusing to Ibrahim. A typesetting error made by a colleague read "Pope Shenouda advocates Islam" instead of "Pope Shenouda advocates peace" (*salaam*) The error was corrected in the second edition of the paper; but the damage had been done. Another error occurred when an editor jotted "if there is space" at the side of a text. The note was included in an obituary, which then read, "May God rest his soul in heaven, if there is space." It has become a standing joke for typesetters, composition technicians and proofreaders alike.

Landmark days for Ibrahim and the other printers include the day Nasser declared his resignation — "a day of sadness and grief at the Al-Ahram printshop"; the day Abdel-Hakim Amer died ("the front page was changed, and I alone undertook the composition of the entire page from the first to the last line"); the death of Nasser ("all the newspapers were framed in black"); the 6 October victory; the bread riots of 18 and 19 January 1977 (layout editors were continuously on the go, running to the print shop with one line of newsprint at a time, in a race to keep up with printing deadlines and get the newspaper published").

"The drastic September decrees passed by Sadat, when 1,056 people were arrested in under 24 hours: that was another memorable day for us in the printshop. Among the people arrested was Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, the former chairman and editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram*, and the man who deserves credit for the new premises. Pope Shenouda III, the head of the Coptic Church, and Fouad Serageddin Pasha, the Wafdist statesman and politician, were also on the list of detainees. A layout editor handed me a list which had been given him by Ibrahim Nafie, the editor-in-chief, and asked me not to disclose its contents until the official announcement had been made. I kept the secret for ten hours."

For someone forced to break off one of the most intimate, long-standing relationships of his life, under the pretext that time had passed, Ibrahim seems quite content. Today, he works in the paper recycling department. He lives with his wife and three daughters in Heliopolis, in a house bought many years ago by his father. One daughter studied Arabic literature, while the other is a social worker. The third, however, is a computer expert. A girl after her father's heart, she works in the Al-Ahram printshop, on computer-assisted composition. From hot lead to cold print: the machines are still in the family.

Profile by **Samir Sobhi**

